

NISI DOMINUS



Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it : except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.

It is vain for you that ye rise up early, and so late take rest, and eat the bread of toil : for so he giveth unto his beloved in sleep.

PSALM 127

# Nisi Dominus

A Survey of the Palestine Controversy

by

Nevill Barbour

*With Three Maps*

THE INSTITUTE FOR PALESTINE STUDIES  
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## NOTE TO SECOND IMPRESSION

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## PREFACE

PALESTINE, an Oriental country about the size of Wales, is a somewhat arid prolongation of Syria to the south. The cultivable land consists of a coastal plain backed by a ridge of hills, beyond and parallel to which the river Jordan flows along a profound cleft until it reaches the Dead Sea, lying more than 1000 feet below the level of the Mediterranean. The southern half of the country is desert. The cultivable area can be crossed in a car from west to east in two hours and from north to south in five hours.

For more than a thousand years the country has formed an integral part of the Arabic-speaking world. This comprises the countries of Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the Yemen, and Egypt, which are to-day striving to create one great cultural and economic unit.

In the Middle Ages an attempt was made by the Latin Christian Powers to detach Palestine from this unity and to bring it into the polity of Western European states. This attempt, known as the Crusades, was decisively defeated after several generations of fighting.

During the First World War, in 1917, the British Government issued the Balfour Declaration. In this they undertook to use their best endeavours to establish in Palestine a National Home for the Jewish people. Justification for this undertaking was found in the historic connexion of the Jewish people with Palestine. This referred to the fact that between 2500 and 1800 years ago it was in the Hebrew states of Judah and Israel that there was created the religion of Judaism, which is to-day the most obvious link between the various Jewish communities of the world. In 1922 international sanction was given to the Balfour Declaration by the issue of the Palestine Mandate. As the phrase 'National Home' had given rise to conflicting interpretations an official definition was issued by the British Government before the ratification of the Mandate. This definition stated that a Jewish National Home implied "not the imposition of a Jewish nationality upon the inhabitants of Palestine as a whole," but the creation of "a centre in which the Jewish people as a whole may take, on grounds of religion and race, an interest and a pride." It was after an assurance had been received from the Zionist Organization that it would act in conformity with this policy



that it was recognized as the appropriate Jewish Agency under the Palestine Mandate for co-operating with the Administration of Palestine.

Under the Mandate a Jewish National Home of more than half a million souls has been created in the course of roughly a quarter of a century. Zionists claim that every Jew in the world has the right to immigrate to this National Home, regardless of the wishes of the inhabitants of Palestine as a whole or of the feelings of the greater Arab world. This claim has given rise to great controversy, and resulted in several outbreaks of violence, of which the disturbances of 1936-39 amounted to an Arab national rising. In order to settle so many immigrants in a short time in a very limited area the Zionist Organization has advocated turning Palestine into "the Birmingham of the Near East," and has sought to demonstrate the possibility of doing so by claiming that "the Jewish people can do on one dunam [ $\frac{1}{4}$  acre] what other nations could not do on a hundred dunams."

The settlement of half a million Jews has, in fact, been a very remarkable achievement. As such it is a tribute to the vitality, intelligence, and resolution of the Jewish people organized on a national basis by political Zionism. It would, however, never have been realized but for the closing of the New World to large-scale immigration and the spread of anti-Semitism in Europe. These two events have directed to Palestine quantities of immigrants and of capital which would otherwise have remained in the countries of origin or have gone elsewhere than to Palestine.

In recent years the problem has been intensified by the officially expressed claim of the Zionist Organization to convert the Jewish National Home into a Hebrew state or commonwealth. This claim is based on the doubtful theory that the link which binds together Jews of, for example, Polish, North African, South Arabian, or Negro provenance is a common racial or Palestinian origin, not adherence to a common religion.

The following pages contain a survey of the Palestine question which, while very concise, is, I hope, sufficiently detailed to enable the reader to form a correct judgment about any future developments in that country.

For the Arab and Jewish background until the outbreak of the Palestine disorders in 1936 I have relied principally upon written sources; for the later period I have had the advantage of knowledge derived from six years' residence in Palestine and from personal acquaintance with many of the leading figures in the events described.

The title "Nisi Dominus" is, of course, taken from the opening words of the Latin version of Psalm 127, of which the English Revised Version appears facing the title-page of this book. According to Ernest Renan, this Psalm was originally composed with reference to the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem at the time of King Cyrus.

My best thanks are due to friends, Christian, Muslim, and Jewish, who have given me their advice and criticism, or assisted me to find the necessary information. In particular I have to express my gratitude to those who read the work in manuscript, and especially to Miss Elizabeth Monroe for many valuable suggestions which have been incorporated in it.

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N.B.





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## CHAPTER I

# THE JEWS IN ANTIQUITY

### Jewish Origins—The Hebrew States and the First Jewish National Home

THE ancestors of the people whom we know to-day as the Jews seem, at the time of their first appearance in history, to have been nomads, possessing little in the way of material civilization. The present state of our knowledge does not permit us to say with any certainty from which of the races existing at that time they were derived, where their original homeland had been, or what language they spoke before they entered the Land of Canaan. Hebrew, which was their language from the time of their establishment there until the sixth or fifth century B.C., appears to be a variant of the Canaanitish speech which was predominant throughout Western Syria from at least 1500 B.C. The meaning of the word 'Hebrews' is often stated to be 'those who come from beyond,' 'outsiders,' but it seems incredible that any people should give itself such a designation.

By a process of infiltration, generally accompanied by fighting, the Hebrews gradually established themselves in the hills of Samaria and Judæa. By the year 1000 B.C. they formed such a strong element in the country that they were able to establish a Hebrew kingdom. Under King Solomon this realm, which itself owed allegiance to Egypt, exercised political control over the country "from Dan to Beersheba." Its capital, Jerusalem, acquired something of the civilization of the Phœnician cities. The population of the country as a whole, however, was still very far from being exclusively or even mainly Hebrew.

After King Solomon's death the Hebrew state broke up into two separate kingdoms—Judah and Israel—whose capitals were eventually established in Jerusalem and Samaria. The historical significance of these two tiny kingdoms lay in the development of the prophetic and priestly movement which took place from 850 to 500 B.C. This resulted in the establishment of a monotheistic religion which is the source from which Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are derived. Those Israelites, originally the majority, who had been indifferent in religious matters or who had practised other religions, such as the worship of the sun, or



of Astarte, or of the animal-shaped gods of Egypt, gradually lost their influence in the councils of the nation. On the other hand, Judaism was only partially successful in suppressing certain other Israelitic characteristics, such as an extraordinary readiness to adopt the customs and outlook of the foreigners among whom they lived. The Jewish nation thus came to be composed of one section which scrupulously avoided all assimilation, and of another which mixed freely with other peoples. Sometimes the two tendencies can be seen at work in the same individual. Thus the Jews have been throughout history, at one and the same time, the most assimilated and yet the least assimilable of all peoples. Nevertheless from 500 B.C. the Torah, or religious teaching of Judaism, began to assume its definitive shape and to be the axis round which organized Jewish life and action revolved. In order, therefore, to understand the later history of Israel with regard to Palestine it is essential to consider the conception of the origins of the Israelitish people which is presented in their sacred books, and has been taught to Jewish children for more than two millenniums. This teaching may be summarized as follows.

The ancestor of the Hebrews was a Mesopotamian, probably of Aramean origin. At a date which may be supposed to have been about 2000 B.C. this man, who was called Abraham, was moved to migrate to Palestine as the result of the following revelation :

Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee :

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great ; and be thou a blessing :

And I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse : and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.<sup>1</sup>

After Abraham had reached Palestine and was already ninety years old, though still childless, the promise was renewed to him in the following form :

" And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land of thy sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession." <sup>2</sup>

In other passages the land promised to Abraham is defined as " this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates," <sup>3</sup> and as stretching " from the wilderness, and this

<sup>1</sup> Genesis xii, 1-3.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis xvii, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Genesis xv, 18.



Lebanon, even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun."<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere in the Book of Joshua,<sup>2</sup> "all Lebanon . . . unto the entering in of Hamath" is mentioned as remaining to be conquered.

We should, perhaps, add here two prophecies concerning the numbers of the nation to be and its characteristics :

And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham a second time out of Heaven,

And said, . . . in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore ; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies ;

And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed ; because thou hast obeyed my voice.<sup>3</sup>

Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all peoples that are upon the face of the earth.<sup>4</sup>

In these promises several significant facts are indicated. It is recognized that the Israelites would become very numerous, that they would exert an influence on "all peoples that are upon the face of the earth," and that they would possess themselves of the land of their "sojournings." This land included all the territories between the Mediterranean and the Euphrates. Its southern frontier was the "river of Egypt" ; it included the Lebanon and "the land of the Hittites." The Israelites were described as a peculiar people, chosen by God, above all the nations that are on earth.

Abraham, we are told, made no immediate attempt to take possession of the land. He and his nephew Lot continued to reside in Palestine as "sojourners." The only permanent connexion which they made was the acquisition of a plot of land near Hebron. This Abraham bought for a price from its owners, in order that it should be "a possession of a burying-place."<sup>5</sup>

The promises made to Abraham were expressly renewed, it is stated, to his son Isaac, and to his grandson Jacob. The latter came in due course to Shechem (now Nablus), and bought land there from the inhabitants, with the intention of settling. This was, however, prevented by difficulties which arose with the people of the place.

<sup>1</sup> Joshua i, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy xiv, 2.

<sup>3</sup> xiii, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Genesis xxii, 15-18

<sup>5</sup> Genesis xxiii, 20



The same patriarch, Jacob, at a later period of his life, was, we are told, driven by famine to abandon Palestine and take refuge with one of his sons who had attained a high position in the Government of the kingdom of Egypt. In this rich and civilized land the family increased and prospered till they became a veritable nation within the nation. With this increase, however, there came a change in the attitude of the Government towards them. They were ordered to undertake manual labour on Government work, and were oppressed and ill-treated. Finally they escaped under the leadership of the 'assimilated' Egyptian Jew Moses. After wandering for forty years in the desert, where they were initiated by their leader into the worship of Yahveh, they finally began the invasion of the Promised Land from the East.

We have thus reached the point at which the Israelites enter the light of secular history. In the Biblical presentation of the invasion of Palestine two facts are clearly recognized. These are, firstly, that the Israelites took over a civilization which others had created—"great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not; and houses full of all the good things, which thou filledst not, and cisterns hewn out, which thou hewedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not."<sup>1</sup>

In the second place, it is stated that the native Palestinians would not be driven out "in one year; lest the land become desolate"; but according to the prophecy, "little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land."<sup>2</sup>

In the eyes of the invaders, relatively few in numbers and coming from the desert, Palestine, brought by the Canaanites to an advanced stage of development, appeared as an altogether desirable and satisfying land.

For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths, springing forth in valleys and hills;

A land of wheat and barley, and vines and fig trees and pomegranates; a land of oil olives and honey;

A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.<sup>3</sup>

This account of Jewish origins, in the form in which we know it to-day, is recognized even by the most extreme critics to have

<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy vi, 10-11.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus xxiii, 29-30.

<sup>3</sup> Deuteronomy viii, 7-9.



existed at least as early as the sixth or fifth century before Christ. It is therefore safe to say that the character of the Jewish people had by that time been fairly formed. For many of the well-known Jewish characteristics are so clearly delineated in this account that much of the future history of the Jewish people may be deduced from it.

From the secular point of view the significance of the Israelitish kingdoms arose from their suppression. For the fall of Samaria in 722, and that of Jerusalem in 586, resulted in the establishment, or at any rate in the reinforcement, of Israelitish settlements in Babylonia, which were the forerunners of similar settlements in every part of the world. The Israelites found themselves very much at home in Babylonia, and some of them have remained there until the present day. In the rich and civilized surroundings the community increased enormously. The settlers appear to have colonized whole districts, in which they cultivated the soil and engaged in every sort of occupation. Individuals rose to high positions in the service of the Government. Nevertheless the Jews—that is to say, the settlers from Judæa, together with the Israelites from the Northern Kingdom, who were assimilated with them—used to think of Jerusalem, some with sentiment, others with a definite aspiration, as their religious centre and their homeland. “How,” they said, “shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?”

Some fifty years after the fall of Jerusalem the Persian Government, which supplanted the Babylonian régime, permitted the return to Jerusalem of a number of Hebrews in order to rebuild the Temple and re-establish the worship of Yahveh. The expenses of the movement were to be borne by those who remained in Babylonia. The decree was thus worded :

Whosoever there is among you of all his people [*i.e.*, of Yahveh’s priests and devout worshippers], his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord, the God of Israel, he is the God which is in Jerusalem.

And whosoever is left, in any place where he sojourneth let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

The new settlement was very limited in area. It was smaller even than the original kingdom of Judæa, which itself had covered an area very little greater than that of the Holy Places Enclave

<sup>1</sup> Ezra i, 3-4.



proposed by the Palestine Royal Commission. Centred in Jerusalem, it extended to the neighbourhood of Ramallah on the north and to a little beyond Hebron to the south; on the east it was limited by the Jordan. To the west it reached only as far as the plain. After the exile the area of Jewish settlement was certainly smaller. Samaria (a few miles from the modern Nablus) was in the possession of Israelites who did not recognize the religious primacy of Jerusalem, with some admixture of colonists from Assyria. In the beginning these Samaritans made friendly advances to the Jews, but their feelings were soon changed to bitter hostility by the exclusiveness of the Jerusalem authorities. The same reaction was evoked in the Arabs of Transjordan and in the inhabitants of the former Philistine country, south of Jaffa.<sup>1</sup> Thus this new Jewish settlement may not unreasonably be called a first Jewish National Home. For it had clearly not been the intention of the Persian Government that a Jewish state should be "set up immediately without reference to the wishes of the majority of the inhabitants."<sup>2</sup> The settlement, in fact, was intended to

result in the further development of the existing Jewish community, with the assistance of Jews in other parts of the world, in order that it might become a centre in which the Jewish people as a whole might take, on grounds of religion and race, an interest and a pride.<sup>3</sup>

For this purpose some of the Jews, "within the limits that are fixed by the numbers and the interests of the present population, should come to Palestine."<sup>4</sup>

We are not told whether any limit was placed by the Persian Government on the number of Jews who were allowed to proceed to Jerusalem. Obviously their numbers must, in fact, have been limited by the "economic absorptive capacity of the country"<sup>5</sup>—that is, by the nature of the land and by the quantity of funds supplied by those Jews that "were round about them";<sup>6</sup> for the most ardent or most pious patriot cannot survive without the means of livelihood.

In all probability the matter was left undetermined: owing to the prosperous situation of the Jews in Babylonia the question

<sup>1</sup> Nehemiah iv, 7-8.

<sup>2</sup> Mr Lloyd George. Quoted in the Royal Commission Report (1936), p. 24. (Cf. pp. 66-67 of the present book.)

<sup>3</sup> White Paper, 1922.

<sup>4</sup> Sir Herbert Samuel, first British High Commissioner in Palestine, June 3, 1921.

<sup>5</sup> Royal Commission Report (1936), p. 297

<sup>6</sup> Ezra i, 6.

of excessive immigration would not arise. There was, however, undoubtedly a "political high level"<sup>1</sup> to the activity of the National Home. For, in response to complaints from the "other sections of the population,"<sup>2</sup> work on building the walls of the city was interrupted by orders from the Persian capital.

Little by little, however, the Jewish element grew in strength, thanks to the energy and determination of new immigrants, such as Ezra and Nehemiah. These leaders insisted that the community in Jerusalem should be Jewish from top to bottom—in language, in observation of the Sabbath, and in race. They even compelled Jews who had married non-Jews to abandon the wives whom they had taken during a laxer régime, thus setting an example which was to be used against the Jews themselves by the Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler over two thousand years later. The Jews thus formed a 'nation' within the Persian Empire in the sense in which they did until recent times in the Ottoman Empire. They were recognized as a homogeneous group which administered their own internal affairs and were represented in their relations with the central Government by their religious chief.

<sup>1</sup> Royal Commission Report (1936), p. 306.

<sup>2</sup> The Mandate for Palestine, Article VI.



## CHAPTER II

### IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

THE National Home in Judæa continued to lead a rather obscure existence for nearly four centuries. During the second century B.C. a strong tendency to assimilate Hellenistic culture manifested itself among the Jews of Jerusalem. An attempt on the part of the Government of Antioch, however, which was at that time suzerain of Syria, to complete the process of assimilation by the substitution of the worship of Zeus for that of Jehovah in the Temple of Jerusalem led to a rising among the peasantry of the Judæan hills. This insurrection, originally inspired by religious motives, became increasingly nationalist in character, and utilized the opportunity afforded by the imminent collapse of the Seleucid kingdom to establish a small independent Jewish state in the Judæan hills. Under John Hyrcanus and Alexander Jannæus, descendants of the leaders of the original revolt, this kingdom extended its territory by conquest until it included Galilee, a good deal of territory to the south of Judæa, and a part of Northern Transjordan. The inhabitants of the conquered districts were in many cases forcibly circumcised.

Before the new state had had time to consolidate itself or to settle its internal problem it was taken over by the Roman Empire. The new rulers, pending the introduction of direct imperial government, formed out of it a subject kingdom which was entrusted (from 40 to 4 B.C.) to the rule of a half-Arab monarch, Herod the Great.

In this kingdom Jews were once again members of a National Home, as conceived by King Cyrus, rather than of an independent national state. For Herod's realm may be described as binational, or even trinational. Several peoples shared possession of the "Promised Land," and Phœnicians, Samaritans, and pagans were in many respects on terms of national parity with the Jews. The Temple establishment was still maintained, as in the days of Cyrus, by contributions from the Jews who lived in Gentile lands. The King was the nominee of the suzerain Power, not the choice of the Jewish people; and wherever that Power chose to assert its authority it could make the Jews feel very little at home indeed. Herod, however, was a man of exceptional ability, and he profited



from the economic and political unity created by Roman rule throughout the Mediterranean to raise Palestine to a degree of material prosperity hitherto undreamed of. The Jewish population, as well as the pagan, increased enormously both in numbers and in wealth, and the King, thanks to his influence at Rome, was able to intervene on behalf of Jewish settlements outside Palestine also. This was, indeed, the period of the maximum development of Jewish influence which the world had yet seen. For the numbers and wealth of Jews within Palestine were as nothing to their numbers and wealth outside it. In every great city of the Roman Empire, and in Persia also, rich and influential Jewish colonies were to be found. Alexandria was half Jewish; so, apparently, was the island of Cyprus. It has, indeed, been calculated that the Jewish population formed as much as one-tenth of the total population of the Roman Empire in the eastern half of the Mediterranean area; and an idea of the extension of the Jewish settlements can be gained from the account of St Paul's journeys in the Acts of the Apostles and from the list of the countries from which Jews were present on the occasion of Pentecost.<sup>1</sup> The relations between these settlements and the natives of the countries in which they lived naturally gave rise on occasion to difficulties, as has often happened in the case of similar Jewish settlements before and since. For the phenomenon which is to-day called anti-Semitism was by no means unknown in the ancient world.

The Book of Esther, for example, which cannot be later than the second century B.C., quotes a typical anti-Semitic argument when it makes the Persian Minister Haman describe the Jews to King Ahasuerus as

a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from those of every people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them.

If it please the king, let it be written that they be destroyed.<sup>2</sup>

The Roman lawyer and statesman Cicero gives expression in one at least of his speeches to hostile sentiments concerning the Jews. These also have the authentic anti-Semitic note, and represent, no doubt, what many influential Romans thought and said in private. The outbreak of mob-violence against the Jews in Alexandria in the time of Caligula is in many respects a typical example of anti-Semitic violence. In general, however, the

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Esther iii, 8-9.



Jews were favoured by the central Government as a peaceful, industrious, and loyal element of the population, while they themselves endeavoured to make their presence acceptable to the natives by emphasizing that their connexion with their fellow-Jews was determined solely by their devotion to a common religious centre in Palestine. In all other respects they claimed that they were simply citizens of the country in which they lived. This is, indeed, the classic principle upon which 'emancipated' Jewish settlements have sought to maintain themselves throughout the Gentile world, ever since they first came into existence, at least six hundred years before Christ, until the formulation of the theory of political Zionism during the nineteenth century A.D. The doctrine was, for example, clearly expressed by the famous Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria in the period with which we are now concerned, when there still existed in Palestine a state possessing a Jewish majority.

Philo wrote, in his *Letter against Flaccus* :

On account of their numbers the Jews cannot be contained in one land. For this reason they gain their living in nearly all the richest lands and islands of Europe and Asia. They, indeed, consider Jerusalem, where the Holy Temple of God Almighty is situated, as their home [or 'National Home'—*metropolis*], but they regard as their country [or 'state'—*patris*<sup>1</sup>] the country in which they have been living since the times of their fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers, and in which they were themselves born and brought up.

It is probably not fortuitous that we find this principle so emphatically asserted by Philo at this particular moment. The growth of Jewish influence, in Palestine and outside it, had led to the formation of political ambitions within the Jewish community at the same time that it stimulated the growth of anti-Semitism in the non-Jewish population. In Palestine the intensity of Jewish nationalism caused a series of insurrections, and the situation gave the greatest anxiety to the Roman rulers. It will be remembered that it was by classing Jesus of Nazareth as a possible leader of a nationalist insurrection that Pontius Pilate justified himself in yielding to the demand of the Pharisees for his death. With the increase of Jewish wealth in Palestine, which was brought about by Roman rule, the nationalist outcry against that rule became daily more insistent. Infractions of Jewish religious customs were utilized as pretexts to inflame

<sup>1</sup> *Patris*—ubi bene, ibi patria.



public feeling ; but these were subsidiary to the nationalist motive. During the siege of Jerusalem (A.D. 67-70) the religious leaders were treated with the scantest respect by the nationalists, and the representative of the Pharisees, Rabbi Yohannan ben Zakkai, found himself unable to reply when the Roman General Vespasian told him that the nationalists who had assumed control in Jerusalem were like " a snake that had to be dislodged from a barrel." Nor can we attribute the revolt to Roman misgovernment.

From the point of view of religious Jews the objection to Roman rule was that it prevented, or at least seriously interfered with, the domination of the teaching later embodied in the Talmud over the more generous Israelitish tradition which had been preserved in some of the prophetic writings, and which was to be renewed and given its definite interpretation in the teachings of Jesus and of the group of Israelites who were his first disciples. The books of the New Testament are contemporary evidence to show that the Roman authorities were consistently on the side of moderation and justice in the religious controversies within the Jewish community. On occasions nothing but Roman intervention saved the lives of those Israelites who declared, with St Paul, that the promises of God applied to the spiritual heirs of Abraham, and not automatically to his physical descendants.

Jewish nationalists, on the other hand, who may be called the Zionists of those times, objected to Roman rule simply because it was alien. In so far as they believed in the Biblical promises at all, they interpreted them to mean that the surviving physical descendants of Abraham (excluding the Ishmaelites, or Arabs, and those Israelites who, like the Samaritans, rejected the primacy of Jerusalem) were destined to take possession of the Promised Land and establish in it an exclusively Jewish political organization. Palestine would thus become a homogeneous independent Jewish state, within its 'promised' frontiers from the Nile to the Lebanon and beyond, and from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates. Once that was achieved, it might be possible—indeed, it would be essential—to go further. Cyprus might become an adjunct of Palestine ; another base would be established in North Africa at Cyrene. When things had gone so far the Jewish settlements in Alexandria and elsewhere would play their part ; the Babylonian settlement would form a bastion to the east. It no doubt seemed to the more extreme nationalists that Jewish influence might well replace that of Rome throughout the Levant. Where Carthage had failed Judæa might succeed.

When the revolt at last began it was carried through to the



bitter end. For three years the Jews defended themselves against the Roman armies, though the final issue was never in doubt. In A.D. 70 the fall of Jerusalem put an end to the remaining rights of the Jewish state. Even so the struggle was revived at intervals during another sixty-five years, not only in Palestine, but also in Egypt, Cyprus, and Cyrene. In each of the latter two districts the Jews are alleged to have massacred nearly a quarter of million Gentiles before they were reduced to submission. [In A.D. 135, however, the suppression of the revolt of Bar Kochba and the establishment of Roman religion in the Temple area at Jerusalem marked the final end of the system, inaugurated in Palestine by King Cyrus some seven hundred years before, by which the Jews had been given a partly political National Home in Palestine. From this date Jewish settlement in Palestine, while retaining a large degree of religious and social autonomy, lost all political significance until the colonization resulting from the revival of Zionist aspirations in the last few years.] Nor was it only in Palestine that Jewry was ruined. The biggest Jewish settlements outside Palestine had been involved in the general disaster, and Jewish influence in the Roman world was no longer a factor of first importance.

The adoption of Christianity as the State religion of the Empire in the fourth century A.D. further weakened the Jewish position, particularly, of course, with regard to the claim that Palestine belonged to the Jews by the promise of God. For while Christians, unlike pagans, recognized that such a promise had, indeed, been made by God to Abraham, they claimed that the Jews, by rejecting the Messiah and putting Him to death, had forfeited their privileged position. Henceforth the promises applied not to the physical descendants of Abraham, but to the Christians, his spiritual heirs. As long, therefore, as the religious beliefs of Christianity held first place in men's thoughts it was inconceivable that Christendom should ever agree to Jewish political domination in Palestine.

### CHAPTER III

## FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO EMANCIPATION

The Jews in the Middle Ages and in the Modern World—The  
Rebirth of Jewish Nationalism

SINCE we are here concerned with Jewish history only in so far as it affects Palestine, we can pass very rapidly over the fifteen hundred years from A.D. 300 to 1800. During all this period the domination first of Christianity and then of Islam excluded any possibility of Jews securing political influence in the form of either a state or a National Home in Palestine. It was the attachment of Jews to the Torah, not their settlement in a particular portion of the earth's surface, which preserved their individuality; and it is remarkable that this individuality was thus as well preserved as that of any nation of antiquity. For it can hardly be doubted that a Jew of the modern world resembles a Jew of the ancient world as much as a modern Greek resembles a Greek of classical times, and far more than a modern Italian resembles an ancient Roman. [The desire to take possession of Palestine, however, did not for this reason entirely disappear. On the contrary, the inculcation of this desire, however much its interpretation may vary, is an essential element in the religion of Judaism and in the Torah itself. But the realization of the aim seemed so remote that pious Jews, while repeating the pledge "next year in Jerusalem," evolved a theory that the promise would be fulfilled only with the coming of the Messiah at the end of time. Meanwhile it would be actually sinful to attempt to hasten its fulfilment by political action. The settlement of Palestine by Jews became again, as it had been in the time of Abraham, a distant aspiration, and the most convinced Jew contented himself with following the Patriarch's example and acquiring therein "a possession of a burying-place." Those Jews who did, from time to time, make for Palestine merely formed there a Jewish settlement similar, politically, to those outside it. Meanwhile, however, the instruction given to Jewish children continued in a hundred ways to stimulate the belief that the Jews were bound to Palestine by a divine bond: prayers were still offered for rain at the seasons when rain would have been suitable in Palestine; many ceremonies and formulæ of speech



recalled Jewish life and aspirations in that land. It is true that even more numerous habits and formulæ of speech bound the Jew to the other lands in which he and his ancestors had lived ; but these varied from one group of Jews to another, while the link with Palestine was common to all.

During the Middle Ages the Jews suffered. But it is sometimes forgotten that they were not the only people who suffered. The Spanish Inquisition, for example, concerned itself just as actively with " old Christians " as it did with converted Jews ; the number of Muslims expelled from Spain was greater than that of the followers of the Mosaic Law. Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims ill-treated one another at least as barbarously as they did their Jewish fellow-countrymen. The most essential difference, perhaps, is that the former in some places succeeded in making their faith the official religion of a whole country ; the Jews did not. The ghetto system, by which Jews were confined to certain areas, in some districts and periods enclosed by walls, was only a development of the Jewish instinct, and, indeed, necessity, to live in compact masses. It was in any case not enforced by law until the fifteenth or sixteenth century, was by no means universal, and nowhere lasted for more than about two centuries. Its restoration by the Nazis during the Second World War was, of course, a perversion of the original purpose, and designed merely as a stage on the path of a ruthless extermination. In justification of the system it can at least be argued that the mixing of Jews and Gentiles, unless carefully regulated, produces in the Jew, during the process of assimilation, a sort of homesickness for a place of his own and in the Gentile a sense of irritation which sometimes develops into a determination to be rid of the Jew altogether. The ghetto system was designed to obviate this difficulty. Within the ghetto the Jew was as much at home and as free from interference by the Gentile as he is at Tel Aviv to-day. It was, perhaps, the restricted size of the oases allotted, rather than the principle, which resulted in a sense of oppression.

Under Islam Jews were in general happier than in Christendom. Arab Spain is often justly quoted as an example of the splendid position which could be enjoyed by Jews in the Moslem world. Nevertheless in Spain too there was at least one anti-Semitic outbreak, in Granada in 1066, which resulted in a massacre, and there was evidence of the persistence of the 2000-year-old Jewish aspiration for an independent state in Palestine. The latter sentiment, for example, appears clearly in a famous poem written



by the Spanish Jewish poet Judah Halevi early in the twelfth century :

My heart is in the East and I in the utmost West !  
 How can I find savour in food ? How can it be sweet to me,  
 How can I be quit of my vows and my bonds, when Zion  
 Is in the chains of Rome and I in Arab fetters ?  
 How easily could I surrender all the good things of Spain  
 For the sight, more precious in my eyes, of the dust of  
 the ruined sanctuary !

The poet did not content himself with expressing his desire in verse. He made his way from Toledo, through Alexandria and Cairo, to Tyre and Damascus. In the latter city he disappears from history. A Jewish tradition relates that he was ridden down in Jerusalem by an Arab and slain within sight of the Temple area ; others say that he died on the way to Jerusalem from Damascus.

His allusion to the " chains of Rome " is, of course, to the Crusading kingdom of Jerusalem. It is remarkable that Christians too should at one time have attempted to possess themselves of Palestine on account of an impulse which was in origin mystical. Their régime was, however, primarily a military occupation. " The wonder is," says a modern historian, " that the kingdom hung so long together, which, indeed, it never would have done had there not been an increasing flow, year by year, of Knights and Pilgrims for its defence." <sup>1</sup>

Even apart from the Crusades, it is safe to say that throughout the Middle Ages Palestine was more visited by Christians than by Jews. Only after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain were a few attempts made at extensive settlements, notably at Safad and Tiberias. In the latter town and in seven surrounding villages Jewish agricultural colonization was attempted in the middle of the sixteenth century under the patronage of a Jewish adviser of the Sultan who was created Duke of Naxos. In the seventeenth century masses of Jews were led to prepare for a mass migration to Palestine by the proclamations of the false Messiah Shabbetai Zevi, and it was years before the superstitious populace finally resigned themselves to abandon the hopes which had been raised.

A complete transformation of Jewish life began about the middle of the eighteenth century. This was the result of the weakening of religious sanctions, the spread of the humanitarian ideas which led to the French Revolution, and the enormous

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Muir, *The Mameluke or Slave Dynasty of Egypt, 1260-1517* (London, 1896), Introduction.



increase of population which accompanied the Industrial Revolution. In this increase the Jewish population fully shared. From 2,500,000 in 1800 the Jews increased to 5,000,000 in 1850 and to 17,000,000 in 1939. Until emigration to the United States of America in the beginning of the twentieth century created a fresh centre in the New World by far the most important centre of Jewish life was to be found in the Polish provinces of Russia and in the adjacent districts. This centre had come into being as the result of the hospitality offered by the Polish kings to Jewish refugees after their expulsion from England and France and their persecution in Germany. In Poland the Jews for centuries shared as much in the security and prosperity of the country as in its adversities. Much of the trade was in their hands, and they possessed village as well as urban communities. In their homes they spoke Yiddish, which is a slightly Hebraized form of a German dialect which they had acquired when living in German-speaking lands. Their religious education, largely Talmudic, taught them the use of Hebrew and Aramaic. "Until emancipation—that is, full legal equality with the non-Jewish population," writes the Jewish author of a history of the Zionist movement,

the Jews formed a special national body. . . . Nobody, least of all they themselves, doubted that the Jews were a people. Living in their own residential quarters and sharply separated from the rest of the population, they led a national life, with their own religion, customs, speech, and to a large extent their own law. As a tax-paying body they often formed a unit possessing internal autonomy. Economically they were forced together in certain professions. Their intercourse with the outer world was an affair, one might almost say, of foreign politics.<sup>1</sup>

The spiritual and intellectual condition of these Ashkenazi, or Central European Jews, was often deplorable. Crowded into dense masses, often living in filthy conditions, they inclined on the one side to gross superstition, on the other to visionary dreams. The first Jewish group to be redeemed from this state of affairs was the relatively small German Jewish community, and it owed its emancipation to the influence of German civilization. Speaking of the period towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Jewish author quoted above says :

German culture cast its gleaming light into the dark Jewish lane. Dark ; for at that time the cultural level of the Jews was of un-

<sup>1</sup> A. Böhm, *Die Zionistische Bewegung* (Tel Aviv, 1935), vol. i, p. 15.



exampled lowness. In the German Jewish communities the holiness of certain amulets was the chief subject of discussion ; and where the masses dwelt, in Russia, there reigned the darkest superstition, the tyranny of the extraordinarily backward communal authorities.<sup>1</sup>

The Jewish concentration in compact masses had, as we have mentioned, been the result of the Jewish instinct to keep separate from the Gentiles and to fulfil the promise that they should be "a peculiar people." The separation, enforced throughout the centuries, still further accentuated certain Jewish characteristics, such as an intellectualism which was often out of touch with practical realities and a fiery Messianic and Apocalyptic imagination. When emancipation came, therefore, and the Jews mingled in Gentile society, they found themselves moving in a world with whose conventions of conduct they were entirely unfamiliar.

"In their consciousness," says a Jewish writer,

a complete transformation took place. The ghetto no longer seemed to them the result of their own need for separation, but the wilful oppression of a foreign Power. The cleavage between the Christian and the Jewish world was attributed to Christian prejudices by which the Western world wronged Jewry.

Meanwhile

the spiritual and material pressure which drove the Jews to leave the ghetto had made them ravenous for the ideal and material riches of the world which opened before them. They had a tremendous appetite for knowledge, gold, and influence.

But at the same time

they had all the failings of men who are not accustomed to liberty. "They appear in modern society," writes Bernard Lazare, "not as guests, but as conquerors. They are like a herd that has been shut in ; suddenly the barrier falls and they rush over the open field. The power of expansion which they have acquired is formidable." The relative ease of the conquest generates in the Jews a mass of illusions, an irresponsibility, and in the end a feebleness which leaves them helpless against the reaction. . . . In general the Jew forgets that the revolution freed him not only from his foreign oppressors, the feudal State and the Church, but also from his own theocracy, which was certainly no less tyrannical. . . . It seems to him that the Christians must alter their nature for his benefit ; it rarely occurs to him that he himself has a far greater

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.



transformation to pass through. The expectation of deliverance by the progress of humanity—i.e., by the improvement of others—makes the Jews in the domain of their own affairs passive and fatalistic, and leaves them in the disastrous error of a naïve belief in progress.<sup>1</sup>

In Germany the number of Jews was small, and though their rapid and extensive conquest of the professions and their influence in the intellectual and political life of the country gave rise to complaint, their assimilation would probably have been carried through to the end if it had not been for the constant infiltration of newcomers from the inexhaustible reservoir over the frontier. For during the nineteenth century the masses of Russian Jewry began to feel an ever-increasing envy of the position of the emancipated Jews in Germany, and to press for the extension of similar privileges to themselves. Russia, however, was a relatively backward country, which had by no means solved the question of its own transformation into a modern state. Moreover, the number of its Jews was enormous. In these circumstances the assimilation of the Jewish population was beyond its ability. Faced with the formidable power of Jewry, it resorted to restrictive measures. These served only to create in the Jewish masses an ever more intense and more explosive consciousness of their Jewish individuality, and a readiness to listen to any sort of revolutionary theory which promised to create happier conditions for them. Towards the end of the nineteenth century an enormous number escaped from this *impasse* by emigration to the United States of America. Owing, however, to the high rate of natural increase, emigration, even at the rate of 100,000 a year for fourteen years, left the population in the country of origin greater at the end of the period than it had been at the beginning.

In Western Europe the situation was entirely different. At one time or another between the eleventh and the fifteenth centuries persecution or expulsion (from England in 1290, France in 1306, and Spain in 1492) had more or less cleared this area of Jews, and only comparatively few drifted back during the succeeding centuries. These were, for the most part, Jews who had been trained in the great traditions of Muslim and Christian Spain. They were not numerous, and could therefore be fairly completely assimilated to the local population. From 1655 Cromwell had allowed Jews to remain in England undis-

*Ordo*, revue bimensuelle, organe du comité juif d'études politiques (Paris, April 1, 1938), No. 1.



turbed, and in 1668 the Governor of the East India Company proposed the naturalization of certain Jews on account of their ability as financiers and merchants. In 1847 the City of London elected Baron de Rothschild to the British House of Commons, although Parliament had not yet accorded Jews the right to become members. During the second half of the nineteenth century Jews were given the full right of British citizenship, and at once began to take a notable part in British life. In the beginning of the twentieth century we find Jews as Cabinet Ministers and a Jew as Viceroy of India. When, however, large numbers of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe began to arrive in England, about 1900, a Royal Commission was appointed to consider the question of "Alien Immigration" (1903), and, in spite of evidence by no means unfavourable to the character of the immigrants, restrictions were introduced. This had the result that the Jews in England were still stated to be only about half of 1 per cent. of the population at the end of the War of 1914-18.<sup>1</sup> Similar conditions prevailed in France and Italy.

In the United States of America at the present time the Jewish population amounts to over 5,000,000; the process of assimilation has hitherto proceeded very rapidly; Jews have held high office and attained tremendous wealth and influence. Conditions in the United States of America are, however, such that the relation of Jew and Gentile has not yet become a serious problem, though there is a tendency towards a social boycott of Jews.

There are also between 1,000,000 and 2,000,000 Jews living in Oriental countries, of whom the majority are in the Arabic-speaking world. These tend to develop with the peoples among whom they live. In certain cases, however, as in French North Africa, their rapid assimilation to the life and interests of the foreign rulers has made them an object of hatred and suspicion to the native peoples.

Jewish influence in the Christian world reached its climax in the first quarter of the twentieth century, when at the end of the War of 1914-18 Jewish leaders hoped to bring about the emancipation of the remaining Jewish masses. Meanwhile Jewish nationalists began to express the fear that if the Jews as a whole mingled with the Gentiles and became assimilated to them the entire community would eventually lose the Jewish individuality which it had hitherto preserved by segregation and observance of the Mosaic Law. They began, therefore, to dream

<sup>1</sup> A considerable influx has certainly occurred since as a result of Nazi persecution.



of establishing a territorial centre for the Jews, such as other peoples possessed, and so transforming Jewry from a community kept together by religion into a community kept together by nationalism.

In these circumstances it was natural that the Jewish aspiration to acquire Palestine, now 3000 years old, should begin to reappear. Jews, it seemed, were no longer hated on account of their religion ; they had the ear of European statesmen ; they had money and they had men. Christian feeling would no longer object so strongly to a Jewish domination in the Holy Land ; the Muslim world had been so far weakened that a foreign Power might hope to conquer and keep Palestine. It is, therefore, not surprising that already two years before the end of the eighteenth century we find an explicit project for forming a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine.

For in 1798 a French Jew addressed a letter to his co-religionists in which he suggested the organization of a Jewish Council composed of representatives of all the branches of the Jewish population of the world. This was to meet in Paris and submit proposals to the Government of France for the restoration of the Jews to their country.

“ The country we propose to occupy,” he wrote,

shall include (liable to such arrangements as shall be agreeable to France) Lower Egypt, with the addition of a district of country which shall have for its limits a line running from St Jean d'Acre to the Dead Sea, and from the south point of that lake to the Red Sea. This position, which is the most advantageous in the world, will render us, by the navigation of the Red Sea, masters of the commerce of India, Arabia, and the South and East of Africa. . . . The neighbourhood of Aleppo and Damascus will facilitate our commerce with Persia ; and by the Mediterranean we may communicate with Spain, France, Italy, and the rest of Europe. Placed in the centre of the world, our country will become the *entrepôt* of all the rich and precious productions of the earth.

The Council shall offer to the French Government, if it will give us the assistance necessary to enable us to return to our country, and to maintain ourselves in the possession of it,

- (1) Every pecuniary indemnification.
- (2) To share the commerce of India, etc., with the merchants of France only.

The other arrangements and the propositions to be made to the Ottoman Porte cannot yet be rendered public ; we must in these

matters repose on the wisdom of the Council and the good faith of the French nation.<sup>1</sup>

In the following year the official organ of the French Government, the *Gazette Nationale*<sup>2</sup>, published a notice which is a curious echo of the preceding letter. It runs as follows :

Bonaparte has published a proclamation in which he invites all the Jews of Asia and Africa to come and range themselves beneath his banners, in order to re-establish Jerusalem as of yore. He has already armed a great number, and their battalions are threatening Aleppo.<sup>3</sup>

The threat of Jewish battalions to Aleppo was entirely imaginary, and the appeal to the Jews, if it were ever made, does not seem to have evoked any response from those to whom it was addressed. The little paragraph was nevertheless a sign of events still to come.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in N. Sokolow, *History of Zionism, 1600-1918* (London, 1919), vol. ii, Appendix 40.

<sup>2</sup> Tridi, 3 prairial, an 7 de la République Française une et indivisible.

<sup>3</sup> Sokolow, *op. cit.*, Appendix 41.



## CHAPTER IV

### LOVERS OF ZION

The Beginnings of Jewish Colonization in Palestine—The Growth of Jewish Nationalism

IN 1784 a son was born to a Jewish merchant of Leghorn, in Italy, and given the name Moses Haim Montefiore. In due course the uncle of this boy purchased for him the right to practise as one of the twelve Jewish brokers permitted at that time by the City of London. By the year 1824 he had already amassed a sufficient fortune to enable him to retire. In 1837 he returned from a visit to Palestine, where he had ascertained that there were at that time about 8000 Jews, living principally in Jerusalem, Safad, Tiberias, and Hebron. During this voyage he made the acquaintance of Mohammed Ali, Pasha of Egypt, of whose domains Palestine then formed part. In 1838 Sir Moses, who had been knighted in the preceding year, set forth on a second journey to Palestine. In the diary of this voyage, under the heading "Safad, May 24th, 1839," there occurs the following passage :

From all information I have been able to gather the land in this neighbourhood appears to be particularly favourable for agricultural speculation. There are groves of olive-trees, I should think more than five hundred years old, vineyards, much pasture, plenty of wells ; also fig-trees, walnuts, almonds, mulberries, etc., and rich fields of wheat, barley, and lentils ; in fact, it is a land that would produce almost everything in abundance, with very little skill and labour. I am sure if the plan I have in contemplation should succeed, it will be the means of introducing happiness and plenty into the Holy Land. In the first instance, I shall apply to Mohammed Ali for a grant of land for fifty years ; some one or two hundred villages ; giving him an increased rent of from ten to twenty per cent. ; and paying the whole in money annually in Alexandria, but the land and villages to be free, during the whole term, from every tax or rate, either of Pasha or Governor of the several districts ; and liberty being accorded to dispose of the produce in any quarter of the globe. The grant obtained, I shall, please Heaven, on my return to England, form a company for the cultivation of the land and the encouragement of our brethren in Europe to return to Palestine. Many Jews now emigrate to New South Wales, Canada,



etc., but in the Holy Land they would find a greater certainty of success; here they will find wells already dug, olives and vines already planted, and a land so rich as to require little manure. By degrees I hope to induce the return of thousands of our brethren to the Land of Israel. I am sure they would be happy in the enjoyment of the observance of our holy religion, in a manner which is impossible in Europe.

Changes in the political situation prevented any hope of the realization of this project, but Sir Moses succeeded in 1840 in getting a promise from Lord Palmerston that English Consuls in the East would constitute themselves as far as possible the protectors of the Jews in Turkish domains.

Another project for Jewish colonization in Palestine, initiated by an English officer, Colonel Gawler, in 1845, was equally unsuccessful. In 1854, however, Sir Moses Montefiore succeeded in providing land on which fifty-four families from Safad could take up farming. In 1870 the Alliance Israélite Universelle, on the initiative of a group of Russian Jews, founded an agricultural school near Jaffa with the intention of providing instruction in farming for the sons of Jews living in the Near East. The land for the school, which was given the name Mikveh Israel, amounted to 2500 dunams (about 600 acres), and was granted to the society by the Ottoman Government. In 1878 two English Christians—the Earl of Shaftesbury and Mr Laurence Oliphant—took steps to assist the Jews of Jerusalem to acquire a further 2500 dunams near Jaffa and to found the colony of Petah Tikvah.

Meanwhile Jewish students in Russia were forming themselves into clubs with the intention of emigrating to Palestine as soon as opportunity offered. The best known of these, which was founded in Constantinople in 1882, was given the name Bilu, from the initial letters of the words *Bet Yaacov lechu vanelcha* ("House of Yaacov, come, let us go"). The wording of the appeal which they issued is so characteristic of Zionism and of the environment from which the movement issued that it is worth while reproducing it here in full:

To our brothers and sisters in the Exile, peace be with you!  
 "If I help not myself, who will help me?"<sup>1</sup>

Nearly two thousand years have elapsed since, in an evil hour, after a heroic struggle, the glory of our Temple vanished in fire and our kings and chieftains changed their crowns and diadems

<sup>1</sup> A saying of the famous Rabbi Hillel, contemporary of Jesus the Messiah.



for the chains of exile. We lost our country where dwelt our beloved sires. Into the Exile we took with us, of all our glories, only a spark of the fire by which our Temple, the abode of our Great One, was engirdled, and this little spark kept us alive while the towers of our enemies crumbled to dust, and this spark leapt into celestial flame and shed light upon the heroes of our race and inspired them to endure the horrors of the dance of death and the tortures of the *autos-da-fé*. And this spark is now again kindling and will shine for us, a true pillar of fire going before us on the road to Zion, while behind us is a pillar of cloud, the pillar of oppression threatening to destroy us. Sleepest thou, O our nation? What hast thou been doing until 1882? Sleeping, and dreaming the false dream of Assimilation. Now, thank God, thou art awakened from thy slothful slumber. The Pogroms have awakened thee from thy charmed sleep. Thine eyes are open to recognize the cloudy delusive hopes. Canst thou listen silently to the taunts and the mockery of thine enemies? Wilt thou yield before the might of . . .? Where is thine ancient pride, thine olden spirit? Remember that thou wast a nation possessing a wise religion, a law, a constitution, a celestial Temple whose wall is still a silent witness to the glories of the past; that thy sons dwelt in palaces and towers, and thy cities flourished in the splendour of civilization, while these enemies of thine dwelt like beasts in the muddy marshes of their dark woods. While thy children were clad in purple and fine linen, they wore the rough skins of the wolf and the bear. Art thou not ashamed?

Hopeless is your state in the West; the star of your future is gleaming in the East. Deeply conscious of all this, and inspired by the true teaching of our great master, Hillel, "If I help not myself, who will help me?" we propose to form the following society for national ends.

1. The Society will be named 'BILU,' according to the motto "House of Jacob, come, let us go." It will be divided into local branches according to the number of members.
2. The seat of the Committee shall be Jerusalem.
3. Donations and contributions shall be unfixed and unlimited.

#### WE WANT :

1. A home in our country. It was given us by the mercy of God; it is ours as registered in the archives of history.
2. To beg it of the Sultan himself, and if it be impossible to obtain this, to beg that at least we may possess it as a state within a larger state; the internal administration to be ours, to have our civil and political rights, and to act with the Turkish Empire only in foreign affairs, so as to help our brother Ishmael in his time of need.



We hope that the interests of our glorious nation will rouse the national spirit in rich and powerful men, and that every one, rich or poor, will give his best labours to the holy cause.

Greetings, dear brothers and sisters.

HEAR, O ISRAEL ! The Lord our God, the Lord is one, and our land Zion is our one hope.

GOD be with us ! THE PIONEERS OF BILU.<sup>1</sup>

About the same time a larger society was founded, also by Russian Jews, whose members called themselves "Hovevei Zion," (the "Lovers of Zion"). As the result of these various activities several colonies were founded, including Rishon-le-Zion, near Jaffa ; Zichron Yaacov, in Samaria ; and Rosh Pinnah, in Galilee.

The enthusiasm of these early settlers was unbounded, but they were quite unfitted for their task. Great numbers died of malaria and other diseases, and the colonies would have been in danger of disappearing if a Jewish millionaire, Baron de Rothschild, had not come to their aid, taken over four of them, established a wine industry at Rishon-le-Zion, and bought more land, on which he established further settlements. Other colonies were also founded, independently, about this time (1891-96), including Rehovoth and Hadera.

While this practical activity was taking place in Palestine the new theory of Jewish nationalism was being worked out by a succession of Jewish writers.

The first of these was a German Jew, Moses Hess, whose Socialist views made him an admirer of French civilization. In 1862 he published in German a work entitled *Rome and Jerusalem*. In this he expounded the idea that the Messianic era, to which Judaism looks forward, referred not to the end of time, but to the epoch when the evolution and education of mankind would be complete. This epoch, he believed, had been inaugurated by the French Revolution. In order that the Jews should play their due part in this happy consummation it was essential that they should do so as a national entity. This development could be brought about only gradually : "what we have to do to-day," he said, "for the re-establishment of Jewish national existence is to keep alive the hope of our political rebirth and to awaken it where it is dormant. Then, if the world events which are preparing in the East make possible a practical beginning

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Sokolow, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 332. The addition to the "Hear, O Israel !" seems to be inspired by the Muslim declaration of faith : "There is no God but God, and Mohammed is the prophet of God."



of the re-establishment of a Jewish state, the next step will be the founding of Jewish colonies in the ancestral land, a work in which France will no doubt lend a hand." Hess therefore suggested "the acquisition of a territory to serve as a common fatherland, efforts to establish legal conditions under the protection of which the work can thrive, and the founding of Jewish societies for agriculture, industry, and commerce according to Mosaic—*i.e.*, Socialist—principles." Since Jews could not achieve this task unaided, and since Hess himself was politically a Francophile, he anticipated that the necessary assistance would be given by France. "France cannot but desire to see the road to India and China occupied by peoples that will follow her to the death, so that she may fulfil the historic task which has been allotted to her since her great revolution. What people could be more suited to this purpose than the Jews, who were from the beginning of history destined for the same aim? . . . Frenchmen and Jews, there is no doubt that they were created for one another."<sup>1</sup>

In these ideas Hess had been influenced by the writings of an orthodox Rabbi of the city of Thorn, called Kalisher. The Rabbi suggested that the Jewish millionaires, whom he described as "Jewish princes such as the Jewish people has not seen since the dispersion," should form a Jewish colonization society. This would have the following aims :

It should collect sufficient funds to purchase many desolate cities, fields, and vineyards in the Holy Land, so that the desert may turn into Lebanon and the heaps of ruin into orchards, and the uninhabited waste-land blossom again like a lily and bear fruit for enjoyment like the field which the Lord has blessed. Mountains and valleys, villages and desolate cities, will thus come by degrees into the possession of the society, which will be enabled to issue shares which, though not immediately, will later certainly yield a dividend.

Large numbers of Jews from Russia, Poland, and Germany will have to be supported by the society . . . until they learn to support themselves as agriculturists.

A militarily disciplined force of compatriots must be formed to keep off Beduin raids, exercise the functions of police, enforce law, and maintain order in the land.

An agricultural school must be established for training young Jews. . . .

God will thus assist us with His grace, and we shall, in spite of small beginnings, steadily gain possession of the Holy Land, as the

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<sup>1</sup> Moses Hess, *Röm und Jerusalem* (Köln, 1862), Letter 12.



prophets foretold. But the beginning must be made by us, as I have demonstrated from Talmud and Midrash.<sup>1</sup>

Upon this passage Hess commented, "Was I not right when I spoke well of the healthy common sense of our people and claimed that pious Jews would co-operate with the enlightened on the common ground of our nationalism?"

Hess was, moreover, able to point out that at least one Frenchman had already made the project his own. This Frenchman, a certain Ernest Laharanne, was a striking example of the Gentile enthusiast for Zionism, as can be seen from the following quotation:

People have been talking of the ransoming of Palestine by the Jewish bankers who are found throughout the world, or, more nobly, by a general fund to which all Jews will subscribe. . . . Which European Power would to-day still object to the Jews, united in a congress, deciding to ransom their fatherland? Who would have any objection to their flinging a heap of gold to the Turks and saying, "Give me back my own home and use this gold to consolidate whatever remains to you of your empire"?

No, no objection would be made, and Judæa could extend its frontiers from the Suez to the port of Smyrna, including the entire range of the Western Lebanon.<sup>2</sup>

The Frenchman ended his appeal with a veritable pæan:

Stride forward, noble hearts! The day on which the Tribes return will mark an epoch in the history of mankind! How the East will tremble at your coming! How quickly the enervation of the local races will disappear before the law of work, there where voluptuous ease and brigandage have held their thousand years of sway!

In the East you will become the moral axis of the world. . . . You are the triumphal arch of the future age beneath which the great Covenant of Humanity will be drawn up and sealed, with the history of the past and of the future as witnesses. . . .

And when you make this advance, then remember, sons of Israel, remember modern France, which has ever loved you since your rebirth and has never ceased to defend you.

Hess himself was, as we have seen above, very much more moderate. He recommended only a tentative beginning, and even so anticipated that Jews who were living happily in Western

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> This extension of the frontiers of the Land of Israel to include Smyrna is unparalleled in Zionist geography, elastic as the latter sometimes is.



Europe would never wish to leave that area. The influence of Laharanne on Moses Hess makes it clear that the existence of Gentile believers in Zionist ideas encouraged Jews themselves to indulge hopes that they might otherwise have dismissed as fantastic.<sup>1</sup>

In the somewhat visionary and, indeed, Apocalyptic appeals of the Frenchman and the Jewish Rabbi are to be found practically every argument which has since been advanced in favour of Zionism. The Gentile had fully accepted the idea that the Old Testament prophecies of a glorious future for the Jews were still valid, in spite of their rejection of the Messiah, and that they were destined to be the teachers of humanity. This is, in fact, the reassertion of the belief that the Jews are the "chosen people above all nations of earth." Very characteristic in these writings is the dependence of Zionism upon a Gentile Power and the benefits that this Power is to receive in return for its support. Characteristic is the determination to restore the fertility of Palestine, together with the belief in the forthcoming regeneration of the Near East and the ambition that the Jews shall be the directing force in it.

We have already said that the great centre of Jewish population and Jewish culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was Russia. Under the rule of the reforming Tsar, Alexander II, from 1855 until his assassination in 1881, the movement for the emancipation of the Jews made considerable progress, and there arose among educated Jews a considerable enthusiasm for assimilating Russian culture, instead of, or as well as, the traditional Jewish culture taught through the medium of Yiddish and Hebrew. One of the leaders of this movement for Russification was a Jewish doctor in Odessa, Leon Pinsker. This state of affairs was completely changed by the reaction which followed the assassination of the Tsar. A violent outbreak of mob-violence against the Jews occurred in several parts of Southern Russia, and was rapidly followed by others elsewhere. The difficulties of assimilation were suddenly revealed with painful clarity. In the next year restrictive measures, known as the May Laws, were issued against the Jews. Under the shock of these events Pinsker

<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Hess warned his compatriots that Gentile enthusiasm for the return of Jews to Palestine "appears from one aspect to be merely a milder form of the wish which had brutally expressed itself earlier in the general expulsion of Jews." From another aspect it was evident that pious Christians favoured their return as a preliminary to their conversion to Christianity, while in yet other cases the idea was simply the result of disordered fantasy, religious or profane.—Hess, *op. cit.*, Letter 12.



developed a theory of Jewish self-help which he expounded in a book entitled *Auto-emancipation*. In this work he stated, very much in the words of Haman, in the Book of Esther,<sup>1</sup> that "the Jews form amid the peoples among whom they live a heterogeneous element which no nation is able to tolerate." Because the Jews are not an independent people the world regards them as "a sort of ghost wandering amidst the living." It was, therefore, necessary to reconstitute the Jews into a nation, and to give them an independent existence like that of other nations. The choice of the locality for the Jewish national centre was, he said, of first importance, and should be left to technical experts.

"When looking for a new home," he wrote,

in order to give up our eternal wandering life and to rise as a nation in our own and in other people's eyes, we must not first of all dream of a restoration of old Judæa. We should not start again in the place where our state life was once violently cut off and crushed. Our task, if it is to be solved, must be as far as possible limited, since it is already difficult enough. Not the Holy Land must be now the goal of our aspirations, but a land of our own. The essential thing for our poor brethren is a large tract of land as our lasting property, from which we shall not be pushed out by a foreign master. There we shall take the holiest relics, preserved after the shipwreck of our former fatherland, that is the idea of God and the Bible; for it was these and not Jerusalem and the Jordan which made our former country holy. If the Holy Land could become our own, that certainly would be best of all. But in the first place it must be ascertained, and this is the point, what land is both accessible and suitable as a safe, undisputed, and productive place of refuge for those Jews of all countries who may be compelled to leave their homes.<sup>2</sup>

For this purpose Dr Pinsker recommended that a Jewish National Congress should be assembled. This would form a colonization company, invite popular subscription, search for a territory, and endeavour to secure an international guarantee.

The book aroused much interest, but there was little practical response; and the author had, in the end, to limit himself to participation in the Palestinian colonization projects of the "Lovers of Zion."

In 1881, however, a second significant step towards the formation of a Jewish nationality had been taken by another Russian Jew, Eliezer ben Yehuda. This pioneer settled in Jerusalem and set himself the task of reviving the use of Hebrew

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Leon Pinsker, *Auto-emancipation* (1882), p. 35.



as a spoken language. With this object he taught his own household to speak Hebrew and began to work on the compilation of a Hebrew dictionary.

By the year 1890, then, the idea of Jewish colonization of a nature and on a scale which might lead eventually to the constitution of an autonomous Jewish national centre was fairly widespread among Russian Jewry.

Besides the activity in Palestine, however, Jewish agricultural colonization was also being attempted on a large scale in the Argentine. This was due to the generosity and energy of the German Jewish millionaire Baron Hirsch, who, after a careful investigation of the possibilities in many continents, had chosen the Argentine as the country most suitable for Jewish colonization on a great scale. For this reason the Argentinian movement was regarded with great suspicion and anxiety by the enthusiasts for Palestine colonization. The establishment of a new Zion in America might, they thought, destroy the movement for reviving the old Zion in Palestine. They did not wish the Jewish aspiration for Jerusalem to be interpreted as an aspiration for an ideal state which could be realized wherever Jews were settled. On the contrary, they held definitely that Israel's future mission was dependent on contact between the Jews and one particular area of the earth's surface. For this reason they took active steps to kill the Argentinian scheme. This point of view is clearly expounded by the well-known Zionist writer Shmaryahu Levin in a passage of his autobiography which refers to the time, in 1891, when he was a student in Berlin :

A steady stream of Jewish emigration, wide, deep, and powerful, went towards the United States ; drops of it were diverted from time to time towards the Argentine. And yet the nationalist element among the Jews was terrified, not by the stream towards the United States, but by the drops which fell on Argentinian soil. The reason is plain ; emigration towards the Argentine was bound up with an idea. There was even talk of an autonomous Jewish settlement, a new attempt to bind the Jew to a soil—and not his own. Even to-day we do not quite know whether Baron Hirsch was merely a great philanthropist or a man with a vast dream of a Jewish national construction. But even in those days the proponents of the Argentine plan used the Argentine as their most effective weapon against Palestine. On purely tactical grounds they used the Baron's millions in an attempt to stifle the national movement among the masses of the Jews.

This was, in fact, the first Territorialist movement, without the



official title. The name Territorialism emerged only many years later, at the time of the Uganda conflict, to indicate a Jewish national movement towards a soil other than that of Palestine. But Russian Jewry was agog with the possibilities of the plan, and the Russian Government even gave it legal status and permitted the founding of committees to further its realization.<sup>1</sup>

With such ideas in their minds Shmaryahu Levin and his fellow-Jewish students in Berlin returned to their homes in Russia in the summer of 1891 "prepared," as he says, "to launch the mass movement against the Argentine and to prove to the world that Baron Hirsch was trampling on the will and interests of his own people."<sup>2</sup>

As we shall see, their propaganda was successful.

<sup>1</sup> S. Levin, *Youth in Revolt* (London, 1930), pp. 264-265.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER V

### POLITICAL ZIONISM

Herzl—Political Zionism—Negotiations with Sultan Abdul Hamid, the Kaiser, and Joseph Chamberlain—Uganda—Herzl's Death—Palestinian Zionism

FOURTEEN years after Pinsker had put forward his project for the self-emancipation of the Jews the publication by another Jewish writer of a pamphlet entitled *Der Judenstaat* (*The Jewish State*) had the effect of co-ordinating the various existing activities and forming them within a few months into an organized movement known as "Political Zionism." The author of the pamphlet was a Jewish journalist and playwright, by name Theodor Herzl. He was born in Budapest in 1860; his family moved to Vienna when he was eighteen years old, and for the greater part of his life he gained his living as a contributor to the famous Austrian daily the *Neue Freie Presse*. He was an assimilated Jew who did not trouble himself about the strict observance of the Mosaic Law or consider himself bound by the creed of traditional Judaism. He had had little practical acquaintance with the masses of orthodox Jewry during his early life. Nor did he himself greatly suffer from anti-Semitism among his neighbours, apart from the unpleasantness of overhearing an occasional contemptuous reference to Jews. This, however, combined with what he learned of the conditions of Jewish life in Russia, seriously disturbed his proud and sensitive spirit. His mental disquiet was increased by his experiences as correspondent of the *Neue Freie Presse* in Paris, during the early days of the Dreyfus case, and he began to occupy himself seriously with the problem of how to free the Jews from the obloquy which universally attached to them.

His first solution was that urged by the apostles of Christianity for over eighteen centuries—namely, the conversion of the Jews to Christianity. He proposed that this experiment should be inaugurated in Vienna. Since his object was to redeem the Jews from obloquy the conversion of adult Jews would not serve his purpose, for they might be accused of changing their religion for their personal convenience, and thereby incur greater contempt than before. He proposed, therefore, that Jewish children only



should be converted, and these in an honourable and open manner: the problem of the parents would in due course solve itself by their death. In accordance with this plan he proposed to interview the Pope and to suggest that the heads of Jewish families, while themselves remaining Jews, should present their children "in broad daylight, on Sundays at noon, in solemn procession amidst the clanging of church bells," to be baptized in the Cathedral of St Stephen. "I pictured myself," he wrote, "as standing before the Pope, who would express his great regret that I myself belonged only to the intermediate generation, and as letting fly through the world this message of racial mingling." Benedikt, editor and chief proprietor of the *Neue Freie Presse*, dissuaded him from this scheme, as unworthy of a people with the great traditions of the Jews. A little later, in 1895, Herzl conceived his project for the creation of a Jewish state. The fundamental idea was that Jews, represented by a Jewish Colonization Society, should acquire a territory in which they should be supreme. This territory should be large enough to admit the immigration of Jews on such a scale as materially to reduce the pressure of Jewish population in the country of origin. He estimated that for this purpose it would be necessary to withdraw some three to four million Jews from Europe within a period of a few years, at a rate of not less than a quarter of a million annually. This tremendous rate of immigration was essential, for otherwise the natural increase of the population would more than counter-balance the decrease by emigration, as, indeed, happened in the case of the vast immigration into the United States of America.

By a mass emigration Herzl hoped to achieve two objects. Believing that anti-Semitism depended on the number of Jews in a country, he supposed that its intensity would automatically be reduced as the Jewish population diminished. In the second place, he held that the contempt with which Jews were regarded was not due to anything inherent in the Jewish character, but to the fact that, unlike other nations, they had no territorial centre. Thus he, like Pinsker, rejected Philo's principle that Jews were held together by devotion to a centre whose significance was religious, and that in all other respects they were members of the nations among whom they lived. The emigration which he envisaged was to differ radically from the emigration to the United States of America in that the motive-power was not to be merely the desire to escape from persecution, or to improve the immigrant's personal position, but the enthusiasm for forming a



united Jewish nation. Since the driving-force of the scheme was to be nationalism, and not religion, it is not surprising that Herzl himself did not feel that this Jewish territory should necessarily be Palestine. The essentials in his opinion were that it should be large enough to contain the necessary numbers, and, above all, that the Jews should acquire supremacy in it. "Immigration," he said, "is futile unless based on an assured supremacy. . . . An infiltration is bound to end in a disaster. It continues until the inevitable moment when the native population feels itself threatened and forces the Government to stop the further influx of Jews." In the case of immigration into a country where the Jews were not supreme, he said, even if anti-Semitism has hitherto been non-existent there, the immigrants will carry the seeds with them in their bundles, and the harvest will not be long delayed. Nevertheless, since immigration with a certain nationalist basis was already being directed to Palestine and the Argentine, though on what Herzl considered the mistaken principle of infiltration, his thoughts naturally turned to these two countries first.

Herzl next considered where he could find the necessary financial support for his scheme, addressing himself in the first place to those Jewish millionaires who had interested themselves in the lot of their fellow-Jews and were already financing Jewish emigration on a large scale. In this he was unsuccessful: the support, on philanthropic grounds, of immigration which might conceivably turn into something larger in the course of time was in their eyes reasonable; but to embark on a definitely political scheme, whose success was problematic and whose effects upon world Jewry would be incalculable, did not appeal to them. Herzl did not let himself be discouraged, but turned from the financial princes of Israel to the middle classes and the masses. Here his success was, from the beginning, great; and already in June 1896, when he visited the synagogue in Sofia and found himself unable to address the people without turning his back to the altar, a voice cried out to him from the crowd, "Never mind! You may turn your back to the altar (ark), for you are holier than the Torah!" As soon, however, as Herzl came into contact with the Jewish forces which were willing to co-operate with him in a national movement of the kind which he envisaged he realized the strength of the sentiment which was determined that the Jewish centre should be in Palestine, and nowhere else. Herzl thereupon turned with the current, and without further delay set about the attempt to secure Palestine for the Jews. By mediation of an adventurer, called the "Chevalier de New-



linsky," who had connexions at Constantinople he approached Sultan Abdul Hamid with the request that the Jews should be ceded the territory of Palestine for the purpose of establishing an "aristocratic republic" therein.<sup>1</sup> In return for this the Zionist Organization, which, in point of fact, was at that time an aspiration rather than a reality, would undertake, he said, to restore the finances of the Turkish Empire. The Turkish Sultan foresaw possibilities which might be to his advantage in the willingness of the Jews to provide financial assistance in return for rights of colonization; but he never for one moment thought of allowing any sort of a Jewish state to be established in imperial territory. He therefore sent back an absolutely unequivocal answer on the subject of the proposed state:

"Advise Dr Herzl," he said,

to take no further steps in this matter. I cannot alienate a single square foot of land, for it is not mine but my people's. My people fought for this land and fertilized it with their blood. . . . Let the Jews keep their millions. If my Empire is dismembered they will perhaps receive Palestine gratis. But it must be our corpse which they cut up; I cannot agree to vivisection.<sup>2</sup>

This answer was definite enough, but Herzl persuaded himself that the Sultan was merely holding out for better terms, and that he would yield one day when his need was greater. He therefore returned to Vienna, informing his supporters that negotiations had been opened with the Sultan and that it was hoped to bring them to a satisfactory conclusion. Meanwhile he devoted all the time which he could spare from his work on the *Neue Freie Presse* firstly to the formation of an organization of Jews of all countries which should represent the Jewish nation-to-be, and, secondly, to making contacts with various potentates and statesmen who, he thought, might assist him to procure the Jews a territory. The first of these aims was achieved almost at once, in spite of passive opposition from the Jewish millionaires and rather more active resistance from many of the orthodox. The proposal to hold a Zionist Congress in Munich was defeated by the opposition of the official Jewish community of that city, influenced by a declaration of the Association of Rabbis in Germany to the effect that, while there could be no objection to the "noble plan" of

<sup>1</sup> Herzl pictured this as being on the model of the Venetian republic, with a Doge as the head of the State.

<sup>2</sup> This phrase and the whole of the following account are taken from Herzl's own diary—Teodor Herzl, "Tagebücher," in *Gesammelte Zionistische Werke* (Tel Aviv, 1934), vols. ii, iii, and iv.



colonizing Palestine with Jewish agriculturists, yet "attempts to found a Jewish national state in Palestine were contrary to the Messianic promise of Judaism." The first Congress was therefore assembled in Basle. Further Congresses were held during the next four years. Subsequently they were held every second year, until interrupted by the First World War. Thus from 1897 world Jewry has to some extent been organized as a political force which represents a Jewish national interest independent of, and possibly conflicting with, the interests of the nations in which the individual Jews live.

The programme agreed on at the Basle Congress was the following :

The object of Zionism is the establishment for the Jewish people of a home in Palestine secured by public law.

The Congress contemplates the following means to the attainment of this end :

- (1) The promotion, on suitable lines, of the colonization of Palestine by Jewish agricultural and industrial workers.
- (2) The organization and binding together of the whole of Jewry by means of appropriate institutions, local and international, in accordance with the laws of each country.
- (3) The strengthening and fostering of Jewish national sentiment and consciousness.
- (4) Preparatory steps towards obtaining Government consent, where necessary, to the attainment of the aim of Zionism.

In giving his approval to this programme Herzl, who thereby became acknowledged leader of the Zionist movement, had betrayed his original ideas. The very essence of his scheme had been that Jewish immigration should be directed into territory in which the Jews were supreme. In the place of this conception the Basle programme substituted the phrase "a home secured by public law." This expression was ambiguous, but whatever it meant it clearly indicated something other than a 'state,' and in anything other than a state Jewish supremacy might not be assured, whether it was in theory secured by "public law" or not. Secondly, the Jewish home was not to be established in whatever area investigation showed to be most suitable, but in a definite piece of land, Palestine, concerning whose possibilities no preliminary investigations had been made. There was, it is true, a strong minority of the Congress who held to Herzl's original point of view. It is possible that he hoped that if in the course



of time a suitable territory other than Palestine was offered he would be able, when the moment came, to induce the majority to accept the offer.

It is, of course, not difficult to see the motive which led to the substitution of the phrase "home secured by public law" for the word 'state.' By its very vagueness the phrase enabled the Zionist movement to secure the sympathy of a far greater number of Jews than would otherwise have supported the movement. For there were many Jews, comfortably settled in the Western European countries and in the United States of America, who feared that talk of a Jewish state might lead the Governments of the countries in which they lived to suspect that the first political allegiance of their Jewish nationals was to a foreign state. The natural result of this would be that Jews would henceforth be subjected to restrictions as foreigners, and in the case of an outbreak of anti-Semitism be ordered to betake themselves to their own country. The ambiguous phrase "a home secured by public law" would, it was hoped, not be open to the same objection: it could be explained on the lines laid down by Philo.

In the second place, the word 'home' was intended to allay the suspicions of the Government which exercised suzerainty over Palestine.<sup>1</sup> In this respect it proved for the moment useless. The Sultan, indeed, found it convenient to keep up intermittent negotiations with Herzl as a stimulus to other concession-hunters; but he never had the slightest doubt as to the ultimate aims of the Zionists. In fact, he thought it better at times to suspend Jewish immigration into Palestine altogether. This did not prevent Herzl from continuing his negotiations with the Turkish Government for a whole six years. The type of argument which he employed may be judged from the fact that he informed the Sultan on one occasion that he, Herzl, was the Androcles who could pull the thorn, by which he meant the Ottoman debt to European creditors, out of the Turkish lion's foot. Nor did Herzl hesitate on occasion to represent the Jews as natural allies of the Muslims against the Christians, and to picture a glowing future for a revived Turkish Empire, reinvigorated by Jewish finance. By this means the Sultan would be able to recreate the

<sup>1</sup> Max Nordau has been stated to be the originator of the formula. "It was he that had devised the formula in question, and it had been worded, he told me, some two years ago, sitting in the very room where I write this, in order that the demand for a Jewish state should not antagonize the Sultan too deeply."—Israel Zangwill, "Nordau," reprinted in *The Jewish Standard*, January 28, 1944.



Turkish fleet, and so defy the European Powers. The Sultan, however, remained suspicious, perhaps not without reason ; for Herzl, in the search for possible supporters, had also at the same time approached the Kaiser, then in the height of his splendour, and suggested to him that a Jewish colonization of Palestine would help no one so much as the German Empire. Jewish culture in Palestine, said Herzl, would be virtually German culture. Was not the language which the Jews spoke at their Zionist Congress German ? The Kaiser, if he aided the movement, would thus be combining a great humanitarian action on behalf of the Jews with a master-stroke of German policy. The Jews, added Herzl, were the only people who could enable him to carry out the project of the Berlin-Bagdad Railway. The Kaiser, whom Herzl interviewed at Constantinople, was impressed by his arguments, and promised to receive him at the head of a Zionist delegation during his impending visit to Jerusalem. German policy at that period, however, was directed towards conciliating the Turks and Islam, and, on realizing the strength of the Sultan's objections, the Kaiser at once abandoned the idea of becoming the patron of Zionism. He did, indeed, carry out his promise to receive Herzl and the delegation in Jerusalem, but the nature of the interview made it perfectly clear that no real support was to be anticipated from him. Herzl and his party thereupon left Palestine again in somewhat undignified haste, fearing apparently that they might be assassinated.

In 1902 the protracted negotiations between the Zionists and the Sultan finally led to a definite offer on the part of the Turkish Government. Herzl, who had been honoured by the Sultan with the Grand Cordon of the Mejidieh Order, was full of hope. When the offer was received, however, it was seen at once to be utterly unacceptable. For it was to the effect that Jewish immigrants, provided that they became Ottoman subjects and accepted military service, should be settled "*dans une manière dispersée, cinq familles ici et cinq familles là*, in all Asiatic provinces of the Empire, except Palestine."

Herzl, if he could not for the moment gain his major objective, did not despair of securing a minor aim meanwhile. Hearing that the Turkish Government was dissatisfied because Turkish students returning from European universities had often acquired socialist ideas, he wrote a personal letter to the Sultan. After mentioning that he had heard with regret of the Turkish Government's difficulty, he suggested his own solution. "We Jews," he wrote, "could create a Jewish university in your Imperial



Majesty's dominions—for example, at Jerusalem. Ottoman students would no longer need to go abroad. They would remain in the country and receive the highest scientific instruction while remaining under the laws of their own country." So far as is known no reply was received to this communication.

Herzl thereupon abandoned the Sultan, and in 1902 turned his attentions to Great Britain, a Power which, if it did not control Palestine itself, at least controlled other countries in the immediate neighbourhood. Individual Englishmen had, as we have already mentioned, more than once during the nineteenth century given their support to schemes for Jewish colonization in Palestine. Moreover, for at least two centuries before this a number of English writers had interested themselves in the idea of a "return of the Jews" to Palestine. In general this conception appears to have been the result of the stress laid by Puritanism on the literalistic interpretation of the Old Testament. Thus early in the seventeenth century a certain Sir Henry Finch, who became sergeant-at-law in 1616, published a work entitled *The World's Great Restauration, or Calling of the Jews*, in which he is said to have predicted in the near future "the restoration of temporal dominion to the Jews and the establishment by them of a world-wide empire." Cromwell himself, in permitting the Jews to reside in England, is said to have been influenced by a belief that the dispersion of the Jews in all countries was an essential preliminary to their regathering in Palestine and the consummation of the world. In general, of course, the conversion of the Jews to Christianity was assumed to be an essential condition of the fulfilment of the prophecy. In English writers of the nineteenth century, however, this proviso disappears, and the motive inspiring the suggestion is the influence of the Hebrew Bible and of contemporary humanitarianism, to which an element of English imperialism is now added. Considerable attention was called to Zionism by the writings and personality of the converted Jew and British Prime Minister, Disraeli, and by the turn which he gave to British policy in the Eastern Mediterranean. The resistance which he offered to the spread of Russian influence in the Levant was valuable to Zionism; for the continuance of Palestine under Turkish rule ensured its remaining in the backward condition which alone offered scope for Jewish colonization. A notable exposition of Zionist ideas was given also by the novelist George Eliot in her novel *Daniel Deronda*. Herzl, then, in turning to England, was turning to a land in which public opinion had been already to some extent prepared. At this very moment,

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moreover, the existence of the Jewish question was emphasized in England by the arrival of large numbers of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. A Royal Commission had been appointed to investigate the question of "Alien Immigration," and restrictive regulations were about to be introduced. British Ministers were, therefore, ready to favour any project which promised to afford another outlet for the Jewish refugees, who were henceforth to be debarred from entering England.

With regard to Palestine itself, the Government was, however, as little anxious as the Kaiser had been to antagonize the Sultan. In these circumstances Herzl made certain other propositions, which were suggested by the fact that even those of his supporters who opposed Jewish settlement in more distant countries nevertheless favoured it in the countries adjacent to Palestine. Such colonization, they thought, would be preliminary to that of Palestine itself, and in due course a useful adjunct. Herzl therefore proposed to Mr Joseph Chamberlain, at that time Colonial Secretary, that the Zionists should be allowed to colonize Cyprus. This Mr Chamberlain refused outright, on the grounds that the mere proposal would raise a storm of protest from the existing Greek and Turkish inhabitants. Herzl then proposed Jewish colonization of the neighbourhood of El Arish, in Egyptian territory, on the frontier of Palestine. As this was in the department of the Foreign Secretary, Lord Lansdowne, Herzl was referred by Mr Chamberlain to that department, with the comment that he would have to convince Lord Lansdowne that there would be no Jameson Raid over the frontier into Palestine. As the result of the subsequent negotiations a Zionist Commission, under Anglo-Egyptian patronage, was sent to investigate the possibilities of El Arish as a colonizing area. It reported that colonization would be possible only if the necessary water was taken from the Nile. Lord Cromer, on behalf of the Egyptian Government, refused to permit this.

By this time, however, Mr Chamberlain's sympathy had been fully aroused, and on his return from a tour of British possessions he offered Herzl a territory in British East Africa,<sup>1</sup> healthy, cultivable, and about the same area as Palestine, where an autonomous Jewish province could be established, under a Jewish Governor. Herzl was delighted with the offer; but the opposition of the Palestinian Zionists was too strong for him. In vain the leader declared that Jewish colonization in East Africa would be a

<sup>1</sup> Described then as "Uganda," but corresponding to the territory to-day known as Kenya.



stepping-stone<sup>1</sup> to that of Palestine: the most that he could secure was that the offer should not be refused outright, but a Commission of Inquiry dispatched. Even this Commission, whose report was a foregone conclusion, could not set out until certain Christians offered the necessary funds. At the end of the Zionist Congress, in 1903, which took this decision, Herzl wrote in his diary:

I realize that a decisive schism has arisen in the movement, and that this cleavage goes right through my person. Although originally simply a partisan of a Jewish state—anywhere—I later grasped the standard of Zion, and have myself become one of the Lovers of Zion. Palestine is the only land where our people can find peace. Yet hundreds of thousands need immediate help. To solve this dissension there is only one thing; I must retire from the leadership.

Nine months later Herzl, who had for years suffered from heart attacks, collapsed under the strain and died, on July 3, 1904, at the age of forty-four. The next Zionist Congress—that of 1905—while thanking the British Government for the East African offer, rejected it. Thereupon a minority, under the leadership of Israel Zangwill, seceded, forming a separate body known as the Jewish Territorial Organization (J.T.O.). From that date until the outbreak of the war of 1914–18 this body continued to search for a territory other than Palestine, in order to form in it an autonomous centre for “those Jews who could not, or would not, remain in the countries where they were living.” Among the possibilities examined was that of a Jewish colonization of Cyrenaica, in North Africa, but nothing substantial came of this or any other of its projects.

‘Political Zionism,’ by which was at that time meant the direction of Zionist effort to the gaining of a political charter as a preliminary to colonization in Palestine or its neighbourhood, continued to be the accepted policy of the majority in the Zionist Congresses until 1911. In the Congress held in that year the leadership passed to the party which favoured “Palestinian Zionism,” by which was meant the postponement of Jewish political aspirations and the concentration on the practical work of introducing immigrants, buying land, and establishing schools. In order to facilitate this policy without arousing suspicion of ulterior aims Zionist Congresses from this time forth until 1937 made a point of denying that there was, or ever had been, any intention or desire on the part of Jews to establish a Jewish state

<sup>1</sup> Or temporary refuge—*Nachtsyl*.

in Palestine. The tenth Congress, for example, held at Basle in August 1911, was opened by the President with the following speech :

Only those suffering from gross ignorance, or actuated by malice, could accuse us of the desire of establishing an independent Jewish kingdom. The people who allege this seem, so far as they are honest, to confuse Zionism with the Messianic belief. Our boundless love for Palestine owed its origin also to this belief, but it has never occurred to us modern practical Zionists to introduce Messianic tendencies into our movement. We have never ventured to play so mischievously with the religious feelings of the many millions of the faithful. . . . Clearly and concisely we expressed and formulated our wishes, our hopes, and our goal in our programme. The aim of Zionism is the erection for the Jewish people of a publicly recognized, legally secured home in Palestine. Not a Jewish state, but a home in the ancient land of our forefathers, where we can live a Jewish life without oppression and persecution. What we demand is that the Jewish immigrant to Palestine be given the opportunity of naturalizing as a citizen without limitation, and that he can live unhindered in accordance with Jewish customs. . . . That and nothing else is our aim.

This declaration was greeted with " frenzied applause." <sup>1</sup>

One further Congress, that of 1913, was held before the First World War. It continued the work of organizing world Jewry as a national unit, of promoting Jewish colonization in Palestine, and of perfecting the instruments for future colonization on a much larger scale. As the result of these efforts the Jewish population of Palestine in 1914 is said to have numbered about 90,000, out of a total population of about 800,000. The community was inspired by a strong nationalist sentiment, and many of its members spoke Hebrew regularly. A number of self-supporting Jewish colonies existed, and after 1913 the Zionist Organization set up a system of twelve schools in which the language of instruction was Hebrew.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Jewish-Arab Affairs* (Jerusalem, June 1931), pp. 7-8.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE BALFOUR DECLARATION

The First World War—The Balfour Declaration—The Zionist Commission—The Military Administration

UPON the outbreak of the First World War the Zionist Organization officially adopted a policy of complete neutrality, and set up its central bureau in Copenhagen. In Palestine, however, Zionism had long been suspect to the Turkish Government, and Jamal Pasha, the Turkish Commander, soon issued special instructions for "combating the activity of the seditious movement which is endeavouring, under the name of Zionism, to erect a Jewish Government in the Palestinian portion of the Ottoman Empire."<sup>1</sup>

This charge was substantiated in a report of Bahaaddin Bey, former Commissioner for Jewish Affairs in Palestine at the Ministry of the Interior, Istanbul, who shortly before the War was appointed Kaimakam of Jaffa. In a detailed report he called attention to the following features of Zionist colonization :

The attempt of the Jews to separate themselves from the rest of the inhabitants ; their retention of foreign nationality ; their submission of litigation to Jewish courts ; their own paper-money (by which he referred to the cheques of the Anglo-Palestine Company) ; their own symbols of statehood, in particular the blue-and-white flag ; the Jewish National Fund stamps ; their supplanting Arab labour ; their purchase of land in an attempt to possess themselves of the country ; their disrespect of Turkish authority and of the Turkish language in schools which inculcate Jewish nationalist and anti-Turkish sentiment ; and the autonomy of the Jewish colonies, with their own law-courts and defence services.<sup>2</sup>

In these circumstances leading Russian Zionists were deported to other parts of the Turkish Empire, and a number of Russian Jews took refuge in Egypt. A complete interruption of Zionist activities was, however, prevented by the intervention of the

<sup>1</sup> Böhm, *Die Zionistische Bewegung*, vol. i, p. 293.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in N. M. Gelber, *Hatsharat Balfur Vatoldoteha* (*The Balfour Declaration and its Coming into Being*) (in Hebrew ; Jerusalem, 1939), p. 190.



United States of America and other neutral Powers and by the cautious admonitions of the German Government.

Meanwhile the hostile attitude of Jamal Pasha did not prevent Zionist agents, and in particular the Zionist representative in Istanbul, Richard Lichtheim, from urging the advantages of pro-Zionist policy upon the Turkish and the German Governments, though the arguments used to the two Governments were naturally not the same. To the Turkish representatives emphasis was still laid, as by Herzl himself, upon Jewish friendliness and loyalty towards the Ottoman Empire. When the War had been won, it was claimed, the Empire would have been so strengthened that it would be able to profit greatly from Jewish financial assistance and colonizing activity, without being in any way endangered by Jewish nationalism. A new argument was, however, now added. It was pointed out that the policy of suppression of Arab nationalism carried out under war conditions by Jamal Pasha could not be continued indefinitely when peace was restored. In all probability concessions would have to be made to the Arab demand for autonomy. Under these conditions it would be invaluable for the Turks to possess a Jewish counterweight in Palestine.

To the Germans Herzl's original argument concerning the identity of Jewish and German culture and business interests was stressed. It was, indeed, clearly stated that Zionism was a Jewish international movement, concerned with Jewish interests ; but it was also emphasized that it was a "powerful movement, of great significance for the future, which, from a higher political standpoint, should be of the greatest interest to the German Government." "We wish," said Lichtheim, "to establish, on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean, a modern cultural and commercial centre which will be both directly and indirectly a prop of Germanism." Describing his negotiations with the German Embassy in Istanbul to a colleague in Berlin, the Zionist agent continued :

I brought every argument to bear—the German language and business connexions of the Jews ; their pro-Turkish sentiment ; their possibilities as a counterweight to the Arabs ; their international influence in the Press and finance ; the gratitude of all Jews—for example, in America—towards Germany if she supports us ; the political significance of a cultural base for Germany as the future leading Power in the Near East. I write all this to you, in order that we may say the same thing here and in Berlin.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gelber, *op. cit.*, p. 162.



These ideas were neatly summed up in the sentence "Palestine by Jewish immigration . . . could become a politico-commercial base, a Turkish-German Gibraltar, on the frontiers of the Anglo-Arab ocean."<sup>1</sup>

In order to emphasize Jewish friendliness with Turkey it was suggested that a legion of Polish Jews should be formed to fight with the Turkish Army in the defence of Palestine. The formation of this force, which was to consist of 10,000 men, was, however, to be dependent on a definite assurance from Turkey with regard to Jewish colonization of Palestine after the War. This assurance was never forthcoming, and in view of the more favourable attitude towards Zionism in Great Britain, it was decided that such a project risked losing more than it gained, and it was therefore abandoned.<sup>2</sup>

Before entering on the subject of Zionist propaganda in England a few words are necessary concerning the activities of the future Revisionist leader, Mr Vladimir Jabotinsky, in Egypt. Mr Jabotinsky, from the beginning of the War, held strongly the view that the Allied Powers were going to be victorious, and that the Turkish Empire would be partitioned. He therefore thought it essential that the Jews, as Zionists, should give some definite assistance to the Entente forces, and particularly the British, in order to have a substantial claim upon them at the end of the War. It was, moreover, as he said, essential to awaken in the English "an appetite for Palestine."<sup>3</sup> He therefore proposed to organize the Jews available in Egypt into a force which, he hoped, would fight with the British Army if the latter invaded Palestine. The offer was only half-heartedly accepted by the British authorities. However, a Jewish corps was formed under the title of the "Zion Mule Corps," and it served with distinction in the transport service at Gallipoli. Since the interests of world Jewry constrained the official Zionist Organization to a policy of complete neutrality, Jabotinsky foresaw that he would have to separate himself from the Zionist Organization, which would have strongly to condemn the enterprise. He envisaged, in fact, an "amicable scission between the tactics of Cavour," by which he meant those of Dr Weizmann, "and Garibaldi," by which he meant himself, "which will appear externally as disagreement and strife, but which must develop a common activity within."

Three Jewish battalions of the Royal Fusiliers were finally

<sup>1</sup> Gelber, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.



formed in the summer of 1917, and rendered useful service in Palestine in 1918.<sup>1</sup>

In England the leading part in Zionist affairs was taken by Dr Chaim Weizmann, a lecturer in chemistry at Manchester University and a prominent member of the Zionist General Council. Dr Weizmann is a highly gifted and eloquent Russian Jew whose personality exerts a powerful influence over many people, while it repels others. In 1906 he had been introduced to Mr Balfour. The attention of the latter had originally been drawn to Zionism as Prime Minister of the British Government which made the offer of territory in East Africa. At that time Mr Balfour found the refusal of the offer incomprehensible; Dr Weizmann had, however, since succeeded in convincing him that the refusal had been inevitable, because, as he said, "East Africa is not Palestine," meaning, no doubt, that only Palestine possessed the attraction for Jews which could lead them to create a nation with a territorial basis. During the War Mr Balfour's attention was again called to Dr Weizmann on account of certain services which he rendered the Government in making available a new process in the manufacture of an explosive required for military purposes. Another important convert, made apparently at the beginning of the War, was Mr C. P. Scott, editor of the influential Liberal newspaper, *The Manchester Guardian*. This was followed by that of Mr H. Sidebotham, a leader-writer and military critic on the same paper. The latter then became responsible, with the co-operation of a group of Manchester Jews, for propagating the theory that a Zionist settlement in Palestine would be of great strategic and political value to the British Empire. A leading article which appeared in *The Manchester Guardian* on November 22, 1915, from Mr Sidebotham's pen, was apparently the first occasion on which the journal "yoked the international ideal of the Zionists in harness with an Allied victory in the War."<sup>2</sup> A quotation from the article will serve as an example of the arguments used. "A couple of thousand years before the Suez Canal was built," wrote Mr

<sup>1</sup> Gelber, *op. cit.*, p. 98. The project was apparently disapproved of by Sir Mark Sykes. A letter from H. Sacher to Dr Weizmann, dated June 25, 1917, contains the following passage: "I received to-day a letter from Norman Bentwich. He met Sykes in Cairo. . . . Sykes seems to have criticized the project of a Jewish Palestinian army or legion on the ground that it might make trouble with the Arabs. These things show that Sykes is still more pro-Arab than pro-Jew. In other respects Sykes made a good impression on Norman."—*Ibid.*, n. 104.

This early classification by Jewish sources of British officials into pro-Arab and pro-Jew (before the Balfour Declaration had been issued) is interesting.

<sup>2</sup> H. Sidebotham, *Great Britain and Palestine* (London, 1937), p. 24.



Sidebotham, "the rulers of Egypt were perplexed with the problems of the defence of their land frontier, and what helped them to solve it was the existence in the old Jewish nation of powerful buffer-states against the great military empires of the north."

The ignorance of history shown in this passage is grotesque. At the period mentioned there were, of course, no "great military empires" in the north. So far as Egypt's northern land frontier was in any danger, it could have been only from the aggressive and rather barbarous Maccabean Jewish kingdom itself. Nor had the Judæan state at any time formed a buffer between Egypt and the north. On the contrary, its survival is generally attributed to the fact that it lay in rather inaccessible hills, a little off the road by which the great military empires attacked one another. This is, indeed, recognized by Mr Sidebotham in another passage of the same book, where, in order to demonstrate the danger of allowing the establishment of an Arab state in the Judæan hills,<sup>1</sup> he remarks that the Jews probably owe their captivity to their inability to resist the temptation, in the wars between Assyria and Egypt, of raiding convoys that were using the coast road. However, Mr Sidebotham and his Jewish friends in Manchester—Mr Simon Marks, Mr Israel Sieff, and Mr Harry Sacher—drew up a memorandum on these lines, urging British support of Zionism on political and military as well as on humanitarian grounds; this they submitted to the Foreign Office in the spring of 1916. They also circularized a number of influential people, of whom only ten replied. Of these it is significant that Sir George Adam Smith, the geographer of the Holy Land, wrote "condemning the idea of making a nation of Palestine. Palestine never had been, and never would be, a nation, he said." The "British Palestine Committee," as it called itself, then began issuing a weekly paper, which they sent gratis to those persons whose assistance they hoped to win or whose opposition they desired to modify. This paper has been characterized in the report of the Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs as "a cleverly written paper. The phrasing is that of the British Liberal Imperialist; the content is exclusively Zionist."<sup>2</sup> It is,

<sup>1</sup> Like almost all Zionists, Mr Sidebotham was a convinced Arabophobe.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Sir Ronald Storrs, *Orientalism* (London, 1937), p. 396. A feature of this paper is the extraordinarily frequent use of the pronoun 'we' and of phrases such as 'our interests,' 'our future.' The reader may find it of interest, every time that such a phrase occurs, to ask himself whether the writer's argument is not much clearer and more convincing if the phrase—for example, 'our interests'—be construed as referring to Zionist-Jewish rather than to British interests, and the word 'we' to Zionist Jews rather than to Britishers.



in fact, the type of paper which, by serving supposed Jewish interests under a cloak of serving the interests of the nation, of which the writer is a subject, gives a plausible pretext for the attacks of anti-Semites. About the same period Dr Weizmann was brought into contact with Mr Lloyd George, whose sympathy for all humanitarian projects made him a ready listener. A valuable Jewish supporter in the British Cabinet was the Home Secretary, Sir Herbert Samuel.<sup>1</sup> A Zionist proposal, embodied in a draft formula, was submitted to the Asquith Government in October 1916, but seems to have remained without response. When, however, in December 1916, Mr Balfour became Foreign Secretary, under the Premiership of Mr Lloyd George, Zionist hopes ran high. For Mr Balfour had long sympathized with their aim, and had probably been fortified in this by his visit, in the spring of 1916, to the United States of America, where Zionist influence was strong and had created a very favourable attitude to the project in President Wilson's mind, particularly through his friendship for Judge Brandeis. Negotiations thereupon began between the Government and the Zionists. In these it appears that both sides relied as adviser in Near Eastern affairs on the late Sir Mark Sykes. The choice was, perhaps, unfortunate: Sir Mark was a man of much personal charm, undoubted goodwill, and great knowledge of local conditions; but he seems to have lacked political sense if we may judge by the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916, which, in view of our agreement with King Hussein, was not very honourable, and proved in any case completely impracticable. His efforts on behalf of the Armenians, as is well known, ended in complete disaster.<sup>2</sup>

A second formula was submitted by the Zionist organizers for the consideration of the Government on July 18, 1917. It was worded as follows:

His Majesty's Government, after considering the aims of the Zionist Organization, accepts the principle of recognizing Palestine as the National Home of the Jewish people, and the right of the

<sup>1</sup> In Mr Asquith's diaries there is a note saying that "Herbert Samuel delivered a dithyrambic memorandum in which he demanded that, in case of partition of Turkish territory in Asia, we should take Palestine, whither the scattered Jews of the world should reunite and in course of time receive Home Rule."—Quoted in Gelber, *op. cit.*, Terminal Note 83.

<sup>2</sup> Colonel Lawrence described Sykes as "the imaginative advocate of unconvincing world-movements—a bundle of intuitions, prejudices, half-sciences."—*The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, p. 58. It appears that before his death, in February 1919, he had conceived serious doubts concerning the practicability of Zionism.—Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (London, 1938).



Jewish people to build up its National Life in Palestine under a protection to be established at the conclusion of Peace, following upon the successful issue of the War.

His Majesty's Government regards as essential for the realization of this principle the grant of internal autonomy to Palestine, freedom of immigration for Jews, and the establishment of a Jewish National Colonizing Corporation for the resettlement and economic development of the country.

The conditions and forms of the internal autonomy and a charter for the Jewish National Colonizing Corporation should in the view of His Majesty's Government be elaborated in detail and determined with the representatives of the Zionist Organization.

Meanwhile, however, the Jewish Conjoint Committee, which officially represented Anglo-Jewry, sent to *The Times* a letter strongly protesting against the Zionist project. "The Holy Land," they wrote

has necessarily a profound and undying interest for all Jews, as the cradle of their religion, the main theatre of Bible history, and the site of its sacred memorials. . . . Since the dawn of their political emancipation in Europe the Jews have made the rehabilitation of the Jewish community in the Holy Land one of their chief cares, and they have always cherished the hope that the result of their labours would be the regeneration on Palestine soil of a Jewish community, worthy of the great memories of their environment and a source of spiritual inspiration to the whole of Jewry. Accordingly, the Conjoint Committee have welcomed with deep satisfaction the prospect of a rich fruition of this work, opened to them by the victorious progress of the British Army in Palestine.

The Committee went on to state that in accordance with these ideas it had recommended that His Majesty's Government should issue a public declaration formally recognizing the high historic interest which Palestine possessed for the Jewish community, and affirming that at the close of the War "the Jewish population" in Palestine

will be secured in the enjoyment of civil and religious liberty, equal political rights with the rest of the population, reasonable facilities for immigration and colonization, and such municipal privileges in the towns and colonies inhabited by them as may be shown to be necessary.

Meanwhile

it had learnt from the published statements of the Zionist leaders in this country that they now favour a much larger scheme of an



essentially political character. Two points in this scheme appear to the Committee to be open to grave objections on public grounds.

The first is a claim that the Jewish settlements in Palestine shall be recognized as possessing a national character in a political sense. Were this claim of purely local import, it might well be left to settle itself in accordance with the general political exigencies of the reorganization of the country under a new sovereign Power. The Conjoint Committee, indeed, would have no objections to urge against a local Jewish nationality establishing itself under such conditions. But the present claim is not of this limited scope. It is part and parcel of a wider Zionist theory, which regards all the Jewish communities of the world as constituting one homeless nationality. . . . Against this theory the Conjoint Committee strongly and earnestly protest. . . . They hold Judaism to be a religious system, with which their political status has no concern, and they maintain that as citizens of the countries in which they live they are fully and sincerely identified with the national spirit and interests of those countries. It follows that the establishment of a Jewish nationality in Palestine, founded on this theory of Jewish homelessness, must have the effect throughout the world of stamping the Jews as strangers in their native lands, and of undermining their hard-won position as citizens and nationals of those lands. . . . The second point in the Zionist programme which has aroused the misgivings of the Conjoint Committee is the proposal to invest the Jewish settlers in Palestine with certain special rights in excess of those enjoyed by the rest of the population, these rights to be embodied in a charter and administered by a Jewish chartered company. . . . It is certainly very undesirable that Jews should solicit or accept such a concession, on a basis of political privileges and economic preferences. Any such action would prove a veritable calamity for the whole Jewish people. In all the countries in which they live the principle of equal rights for all religious denominations is vital for them. Were they to set an example in Palestine of disregarding this principle, they would convict themselves of having appealed to it for purely selfish motives. . . . The proposal is the more inadmissible because the Jews are, and will probably long remain, a minority of the population of Palestine, and because it might involve them in the bitterest feuds with their neighbours of other races and religions, which would seriously retard their progress and would find deplorable echoes throughout the Orient. Nor is the scheme necessary for the Zionists themselves. If the Jews prevail in a competition based on perfect equality of rights and opportunity they will establish their eventual preponderance in the land on a far sounder foundation than any that can be secured by privileges and monopolies.

If the Conjoint Committee can be satisfied with regard to these



points they will be prepared to co-operate in securing for the Zionist Organization the united support of Jewry.<sup>1</sup>

The manifesto of the Conjoint Committee produced a storm of protest in Zionist circles ; but its representations, supported by the influence of Mr Montagu, a non-Zionist Jew, at that time Secretary of State for India, were not without effect. For in the Declaration as it was finally sanctioned Palestine was not recognized as "the National Home of the Jewish people," but mention was made of the "establishment in Palestine of a national home." Provisions were also added for the protection of the rights of the non-Jewish communities, and of the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in other countries. The latter provision was generally understood to mean that the development of the National Home should not be such as to imperil the position of Jews in other countries, by causing them to be regarded as foreigners, and thereby deprived of rights which they previously possessed.

The Declaration was finally issued on November 2, 1917, in the form of a letter addressed by Mr Balfour to Lord Rothschild, a leading English Jew in sympathy with Zionist aspirations :

FOREIGN OFFICE,

*November 2, 1917*

DEAR LORD ROTHSCHILD,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you on behalf of His Majesty's Government the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations, which has been submitted to and approved by the Cabinet :

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours sincerely,

ARTHUR JAMES BALFOUR

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<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, May 24, 1917.



Great pains were taken to make the Declaration known to the Jewish population of Central and Eastern Europe. "Millions of leaflets were circulated throughout the Jewish communities. They were dropped from the air on German and Austrian towns and widely distributed through the Jewish belt from Poland to the Black Sea."<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, it was not mentioned in any of the propaganda directed to the Palestinian population by the British authorities in Egypt. "General Allenby's proclamation, published in Jerusalem towards the end of 1917, contained no reference to the Jewish National Home." Indeed, "during the whole of 1918 and 1919 the Declaration was never officially published, never even officially referred or alluded to, in any public function [in Palestine]."<sup>2</sup>

So much controversy has subsequently centred upon the circumstances in which the Balfour Declaration was drawn up, upon the motives of the British Cabinet in issuing it, and upon the precise meaning which the British Government intended it to bear at that time that it is desirable to go into these questions in some detail before proceeding to the consideration of its results.

Mr Lloyd George, in a Parliamentary debate in June 1936, thus described the general situation of the Allies at the moment when the Declaration was issued. "It was one of the darkest periods of the War. At the time the French Army had mutinied, the Italian Army was on the eve of collapse, and America had hardly started preparing in earnest. We came to the conclusion that it was vital that we should have the sympathies of the Jewish community." This statement of Mr Lloyd George was not made until nearly twenty years after the period concerned, and, in spite of it, it is a little difficult to see why the sympathies of the Jewish community should have been considered as particularly vital to British interests at that moment. The United States of America had entered the War some months before; and the Russian Revolution had removed any unwillingness of the Russian Jews to fight on the side of the Allies. Dr Weizmann himself stated before the Royal Commission in 1936 that most of the rich Jews were not Zionists, and that, therefore, no question of seeking Jewish financial assistance was involved.

<sup>1</sup> Royal Commission Report (July 1937), p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Political Report of the Zionist Executive to the Twelfth Zionist Congress* (Carlsbad, 1921), pp. 43 and 44.



At the Zionist Congress of 1921 he was even more explicit. During the War he said, we Zionists

had neither the force of arms, nor gold, nor influence. . . . We had the moral strength of our idea, our historic right, our unshakable fidelity to Zion and a testimonial in the work we had already accomplished for the revivification of Palestine. . . . With these weapons, and these only, we entered the battle for our recognition as a nation.<sup>1</sup>

At the same Congress he warned his fellow-Zionists against the belief that Jewish interests in Palestine coincided with British strategic interests :

Not English generals or imperialists can be the foundation of our policy, but English intellectuals. Balfour had acknowledged [the principle of] the Balfour Declaration long before the War ; the War simply had the effect of accelerating it.<sup>2</sup>

The capture of Palestine itself appeared in any case imminent, and the part played by the three Jewish volunteer battalions, though creditable, was not decisive. We must therefore say that the motive of the chief supporters of the Declaration, notably Mr Balfour and Mr Lloyd George, was primarily humanitarian. Mr Lloyd George himself, indeed, once declared at a meeting of the Jewish Historical Association that the Balfour Declaration was given as a reward for the services of Dr Weizmann in the preparation of trinitrotoluol.<sup>3</sup> The former Prime Minister's statements are therefore mutually contradictory.<sup>4</sup> No doubt, however, it would be true to say that the Cabinet in general were influenced by the idea that such a declaration would in some way help the British cause, at a moment when no help could be neglected. In the propagation of this belief a great part had been played, as we have seen, by the activities of the British Palestine Committee, with its powerful Press connexions.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Der XIIte Zionisten Kongress* (Judische Verlag ; Berlin, 1922), p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>3</sup> P. Guedalla, "Napoleon and Palestine," a lecture given before the Jewish Historical Association.

Mr Lloyd George did not, in any case, explain why Dr Weizmann, member of the staff of a British university, should be given a reward entirely disproportionate to that given to any native-born Britisher who had rendered equally valuable service to the country, nor do contemporary records in any way bear out this theory.

<sup>4</sup> Mr Asquith, in his memoirs, asserted that Mr Lloyd George did "not care a damn for the Jews," and that he was influenced chiefly by a desire to keep "agnostic, atheistic France" out of the Holy Land.



The Report of the Royal Commission of 1936-37, apparently influenced by Mr Lloyd George's statements, said (p. 23) that the Central Powers, meantime, had also recognized the war-value of Jewish sympathy. At the time of the Balfour Declaration the German Government was doing all it could to win the Zionist movement over to its side; and after the Declaration it hastened, in conjunction with its Turkish allies, to formulate a rival proposition. A kind of chartered company was to be created for German Zionists. It would have a limited form of self-government and a right of immigration into Palestine. By the end of 1917 it was known that the Turks were willing to accept a scheme on those lines; but, before the concessions were finally confirmed in Constantinople, Palestine was in General Allenby's hands.

The Report does not give its authority for this statement. It is hardly borne out by the fact that the Turkish Grand Vizier, Talaat Pasha, in reply to Zionist advances shortly after the issue of the Balfour Declaration, definitely stated that it would be "impossible to give any special privileges to Jews. They can only enjoy the same rights as all our other subjects."<sup>1</sup> Von der Bussche, at the time German Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in connexion with these negotiations, simply informed two members of the Zionist Executive Committee on January 6, 1918, that he "welcomed the Grand Vizier's statement," a non-committal remark which provoked the comment in Zionist circles that there was "nothing to suggest a change of spirit" in the attitude of the Central Powers. On the contrary, "the Turkish projects with regard to Palestine," according to a contemporary Zionist publication, "represent not an advance, but a retrogression."<sup>2</sup> The principal Jewish authority on the history of Zionism states, moreover, that "renewed representations which the Jewish Organization in Constantinople made to the Grand Vizier Talaat Pasha at the end of August (1918) had no appreciable success."<sup>3</sup> The latter statement appears to render incredible another of Mr Lloyd George's statements before the Royal Commission:

The Zionist leaders [Mr Lloyd George informed us] gave us a definite promise that if the Allies committed themselves to giving facilities for the establishment of a National Home for the Jews in Palestine they would do their best to rally Jewish sentiment and

<sup>1</sup> *Palestine*, vol. ii, No. 23 (January 12, 1918).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 24 (January 17, 1918).

<sup>3</sup> Böhm, *Die Zionistische Bewegung*, vol. i, p. 675.



support throughout the world to the Allied cause. They kept their word.

It is exceedingly difficult to accept this statement, in view of Zionist evidence that Zionists were conducting negotiations with the enemy Powers, which, if successful, would have nullified immediately any advantage which the Allies might have gained from the issue of the Balfour Declaration.<sup>1</sup>

For the time being, however, the British public had no foreboding of these future controversies. On the contrary, an enthusiastic meeting was held at the Covent Garden Opera House on December 2, 1917, to celebrate the issue of the Balfour Declaration. The speeches made on this occasion by the three English supporters of the Declaration fully confirm the thesis that the motive for its issue was predominantly humanitarian, combined in some cases with a mysticism caught from that of the Zionists. Lord Robert Cecil stated that "our wish is that Arabian countries shall be for the Arabs, Armenia for the Armenians, and Judæa [*sic*] for the Jews . . . and if it can be so, let Turkey, real Turkey, be for the Turks." Similar sentiments were expressed by Sir Mark Sykes, together with the hope that Zionism would "bring the spirituality of Asia to Europe and the vitality of Europe to Asia." Mr Ormsby-Gore, Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1936 to 1938, took a more mystic line. After expressing his pleasure that the Balfour Declaration had been made at a moment when British arms were about to deliver Palestine, thus showing that the British Government was not out for gain, he stated that

he supported the Jewish claim as a member of the Church of England. He felt that behind it all was the finger of Almighty God.

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<sup>1</sup> It is in any case doubtful whether the Zionist Organization at that time possessed the authority in the Jewish world to exert any decisive influence. Ten years later Dr Weizmann, speaking at a banquet at Czernowitz in December 1927, explained the facts with remarkable frankness:

"We Jews," he said, "got the Balfour Declaration quite unexpectedly; or, in other words, we are the greatest war profiteers. We never dreamt of the Balfour Declaration; to be quite frank, it came to us overnight. But—'What you have inherited from your father you must earn it anew really to possess it!' (Goethe). The Balfour Declaration of 1917 was built on air, and a foundation had to be laid for it through years of exacting work; every day and every hour of these last ten years, when opening the newspapers, I thought: Whence will the next blow come? I trembled lest the British Government would call me to ask, 'Tell us, what is this Zionist Organization? Where are they, your Zionists?' For these people think in terms different from ours. The Jews, they knew, were against us; we stood alone on a little island, a tiny group of Jews with a foreign past."—*Chaim Weizmann*, edited by P. Goodman (London, 1945), Chapter XIV.



From the moment he met their Zionist leaders, whether in Egypt or in this country, he felt there was in them something so sincere, so British, so straightforward, that at once his heart went out to them. They had in their leader in this country a man of great qualities, a statesman who had shown a skill, a determination, and a patience which had endeared him to every one. He [the speaker] had done what little he could to help forward the movement, and, in the future, if they were looking out for a friend, they could count him as one of them.

Of the Jewish speakers Dr Moses Gaster declared that what the Jews

wished to obtain in Palestine was not merely a right to establish colonies, or educational, cultural, or industrial institutions. They wanted to establish in Palestine an autonomous Jewish commonwealth in the fullest sense of the word. They wanted Palestine to be Palestine of the Jews, and not merely a Palestine for Jews. They wished the land again to be what it was in olden times and what it had been for Jews in their prayers and in their Bible—a land of Israel. The ground must be theirs.<sup>1</sup>

In saying this Dr Gaster seemed very near to the heretical view that Zionists desired a Jewish state. In the British Press also it was apparent that many writers supposed that it was intended to make Palestine by degrees into a Jewish state. This view was, however, not put forward officially by the Zionist Organization, for Mr Sokolow, at the time President of the Organization, in the Introduction to his *History of Zionism*, written during 1918, stated :

It has been said, and is still being obstinately repeated by anti-Zionists again and again, that Zionism aims at the creation of an independent "Jewish state." But this is wholly fallacious. The "Jewish state" was never a part of the Zionist programme.

As regards the interpretation which the British Government itself placed on the term 'National Home' at the time of issue of the Balfour Declaration, Mr Lloyd George stated to the Royal Commission, twenty years later, that

the idea was, and this was the interpretation put upon it at the time, that a Jewish state was not to be set up immediately by the Peace Treaty without reference to the wishes of the majority of the in-

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from an account of the meeting in Sokolow, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, pp. 99-113.



habitants. On the other hand, it was contemplated that when the time arrived for according representative institutions to Palestine, if the Jews had meanwhile responded to the opportunity afforded them by the idea of a National Home and had become a definite majority of the inhabitants, then Palestine would thus become a Jewish commonwealth.

It will be noticed at once that while Mr Lloyd George in this statement uses the phrase "the idea was, and this was the interpretation put upon it at the time," he omits to say whose "idea" this was or by whom this particular interpretation was "put upon it." That it was not the idea of the Government or the interpretation put on it by the Cabinet as a body is indicated by the official interpretation which is quoted below (p. 68). There can, however, be no doubt that it was, in fact, the hope of most Zionist Jews and the interpretation which they privately put upon it. Obviously Mr Lloyd George himself and a number of other British statesmen personally sympathized with the idea, and they were therefore inclined to put on the Balfour Declaration an interpretation differing from the official interpretation of the Government; and, since they were far more interested in the question than the other members of the existing and subsequent Cabinets, we shall see that their sympathies affected the practical application given to the policy by the Colonial Office and the Palestine Administration.

Lord Curzon, on the other hand, at the time Lord President of the Council, in a memorandum submitted to the Cabinet on October 26—that is, one week before the issue of the Balfour Declaration—wrote as follows :

In reality is not the maximum policy that we can possibly hope to realize one which, if the Turks are defeated and turned out of Palestine, will

(a) Set up some form of European administration (it cannot be Jewish administration) in that country.

(b) Devise a machinery for safeguarding and securing order both in the Christian and in the Jewish Holy Places.

(c) Secure to the Jews (but not to the Jews alone) equal civil and religious rights with the other elements in the population.

(d) Arrange as far as possible for land purchase and settlement of returning Jews.

If this is Zionism there is no reason why we should not all be Zionists, and I would gladly give my adhesion to such a policy, all the more that it appears to be recommended by considerations of the highest expediency, and to be urgently demanded as a check or



counterblast to the scarcely concealed and sinister political designs of the Germans. But in my judgment it is a policy very widely removed from the romantic and idealistic aspirations of many of the Zionist leaders whose literature I have studied, and, whatever it does, it will not in my judgment provide either a national, a material, or even a spiritual home for any more than a very small section of the Jewish people.

When the question came up for final decision before the War Cabinet Mr Balfour stated that

as to the meaning of the words 'National Home,' to which the Zionists attach so much importance, he understood it to mean some form of British, American, or other protectorate, under which full facilities would be given to the Jews to work out their own salvation and to build up, by means of education, agriculture, and industry, a real centre of national culture and focus of national life. It did not necessarily involve the early establishment of an independent Jewish state, which was a matter for gradual development in accordance with the ordinary laws of political evolution.

Lord Curzon on this occasion said that he admitted the force of the diplomatic arguments in favour of expressing sympathy, but added that

he could not share the optimistic views held concerning the future of Palestine. . . . He feared that by the suggested declaration we should be raising false expectations which could never be realized. . . . He recognized that some expression of sympathy with Jewish aspirations would be a valuable adjunct to our propaganda, though he thought we should be guarded in the language used in giving expression to such sympathy.

Two months later, in January 1918, the British Government's policy with regard to Palestine was officially interpreted to a highly placed inquirer<sup>1</sup> in the following terms :

So far as Palestine is concerned, we are determined that no people shall be subjected to another, but in view of the fact :

(a) That there are in Palestine Shrines, Wakfs, and Holy Places, sacred in some cases to Moslems alone, to Jews alone, to Christians alone, and inasmuch as these places are of interest to vast masses of people outside Palestine and Arabia, there must be a special régime to deal with these places approved of by the world.

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<sup>1</sup> The Sherif Hussein of Mecca. Command 5964 (1939). For the Sherif's correspondence with Sir Henry McMahon, see pp. 84-86.



(b) That as regards the Mosque of Omar, it shall be considered as a Moslem concern alone, and shall not be subjected directly or indirectly to any non-Moslem authority.

That since the Jewish opinion of the world is in favour of a return of Jews to Palestine, and inasmuch as His Majesty's Government view with favour the realization of this aspiration, His Majesty's Government are determined that in so far as is compatible with the freedom of the existing population, both economic and political, no obstacle should be put in the way of the realization of this ideal.<sup>1</sup>

From these various statements it would appear that from the very beginning the policy of the National Home was ambiguous, and was, indeed, given somewhat inconsistent interpretations to different audiences in the desire to present British war aims in the most favourable light.

For the moment the party which, in their own minds, interpreted the promise to the Jews most nearly in accord with Zionist intentions predominated in the Cabinet, and in March 1918 a Zionist Commission, presided over by Dr Weizmann and accompanied by that "staunch and loyal friend of Zionism,"<sup>2</sup> Major Ormsby-Gore, as Political Officer, was permitted to proceed to Palestine. Its official task was :

- (1) To form a link between the British authorities and the Jewish population of Palestine.
- (2) To co-ordinate relief work in Palestine. . . .
- (3) To assist in restoring and developing the Colonies and organizing the Jewish population in general.
- (4) To assist the Jewish organizations and institutions in Palestine in the resumption of their activities.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted, together with the statements of Mr Balfour and Lord Curzon, in D. Lloyd George, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties* (London, 1938), vol. ii, pp. 1131-1141. Also in Command 5964 (1939). The sense in which the Sherif understood the paragraph relating to Jewish settlement was indicated by his reaction at the time. Commander Hogarth, who delivered the message, relates that Hussein "seemed quite prepared for [the] formula and agreed enthusiastically, saying he welcomed the Jews to all Arab lands." Commander Hogarth then informed Hussein that "H.M.G.'s resolve safeguarded [the] existing local population." In commenting on the interview to the High Commissioner in Cairo, Commander Hogarth said, with reference to the settlement of Jews in Palestine, "The King would not accept an independent Jew state in Palestine, nor was I instructed to warn him that such a state was contemplated by Great Britain. . . . His ready assent to Jewish settlement there is not worth very much."

<sup>2</sup> *Political Report of the Zionist Executive to the Twelfth Zionist Congress*, p. 44.



- (5) To help in establishing friendly relations with the Arabs and other non-Jewish communities.
- (6) To collect information and report on the possibilities of a further development of the Jewish settlement and the country in general.
- (7) To inquire into the feasibility of the scheme of establishing a Jewish university.

Unofficially, according to Sir Ronald Storrs, then Military Governor of Jerusalem, its task was "to produce certain *faits accomplis* creating an atmosphere favourable to the [Zionist] project, and stimulating to financial supporters, before the assembly of the Peace Conference."<sup>1</sup>

The twelve Zionist schools, for example, which had existed before the War, were reopened and hurriedly increased to forty. The significance of this particular *fait accompli* will appear in due course.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the Zionist Commission made a vigorous effort to create a situation that would vitally affect the political future of the country. Such action was in reality contrary not only to the official interpretation of the Balfour Declaration, but also to a Hague Convention to which Great Britain was a party. For it had been agreed internationally that when an advance had been made into enemy country "the administration should be military and not political, and that such administration should make no attempt to alter or change the institutions of the occupied country." The Zionist Commission therefore encountered certain difficulties in carrying out its duty of forming a link between the Military Administration and the Jewish population. Moreover, the published policy of the Government in Palestine was still that which had inspired the propaganda in the Arab countries, whose results had, in Lord Allenby's words, been of invaluable service to the British forces during the War. This was officially summarized in the proclamation issued in Palestine and elsewhere at the conclusion of the Armistice as follows :

The end that France and Great Britain have in pursuing in the East the war unloosed by German ambition is the complete and definite freeing of the peoples so long oppressed by the Turks and the establishment of national Governments and Administrations deriving their authority from the initiative and free choice of the indigenous populations.

In order to give effect to these intentions, France and Great

<sup>1</sup> *Orientations*, p. 405.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 124.



Britain have agreed to encourage and assist the establishment of indigenous Governments and Administrations in Syria and Mesopotamia, now freed by the Allies, and in the territories whose liberation they seek, and to recognize them as soon as they are effectively established. Far from wishing to impose any particular institutions on the populations of these regions, their only care is to assure by their support and efficacious assistance the normal working of the Governments which they shall have freely given themselves. To assure impartial and equal justice for all, to facilitate the economic development of the country by promoting and encouraging local initiative, to foster the spread of education, to put an end to the divisions too long exploited by Turkish policy, such is the rôle which the two Allied Governments claim in the liberated territories.<sup>1</sup>

"The military authorities," says an official Zionist report dealing with this period, "evidently thought that any official mention of this fact [the issue of the Balfour Declaration] might mar the jubilation of certain sections of the population," whose assistance the British Army had won by declaring itself their liberator. In these circumstances the Zionist Commission

did not, at first, object to such official attitude. . . . They were fully aware of the exigencies of the military situation; they also realized that victory was the first and paramount need of the moment; they agreed that friction in the country might handicap the operations, and that a full display of the Government's pro-Zionist attitude had better be postponed till after the victory. It must be admitted to-day, even by the severest critic, that the Commission was fully justified, under the circumstances, in deciding upon this line of conduct. . . . Moreover, it seemed at that moment (under the influence of the War which had taught us to worship facts and despise documents) that the presence of a Zionist Commission was of far greater importance than a reprint of a mere letter to Lord Rothschild.<sup>2</sup>

Inspired, no doubt, by such considerations, Dr Weizmann made great efforts to dispel Arab apprehensions by a series of reassuring statements. Speaking at the Governor's residence, for example, on April 27, 1918, he declared that "all fears expressed openly or secretly by the Arabs that they are to be ousted from their present

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in W. F. Boustany, *The Palestine Mandate Invalid and Impracticable* (Beirut, 1936), p. 135.

<sup>2</sup> *Political Report of the Zionist Executive to the Twelfth Zionist Congress*, p. 44.

position are due either to a fundamental misconception of Zionist aims or to the malicious activities of our common enemies." <sup>1</sup>

The issue of the Balfour Declaration and the activities of the Zionist Commission could not, however, be altogether concealed from the general population ; it not only " marred their jubilation," but also aroused very great anger and suspicion.

In order to appreciate the point of view of these " certain sections [that is, 93 per cent.] of the population " we must again go far back in history and consider the relations, from the earliest times, of the indigenous, nowadays called Arab, population of Palestine with the Jews, and the nature of the larger Arab question, of which Palestine is only a part.

<sup>1</sup> *Palestine*, May 18, 1918, p. 8.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE ARABS IN PALESTINE

The Arabs in Jewish Tradition—The Arabs and Palestine—The Turks—The Arab National Movement—The First World War—The Negotiations with the Sherif of Mecca—The End of the War

IN THE Book of Exodus it is stated that the Israelites were accompanied in their journey into the desert by a "mixed multitude." Commentators have always been puzzled as to who this "mixed multitude" were. The Hebrew word is *erev*, the unvocalized spelling of which is the same as *arav*, meaning Arabs. It is curious that, on each of the infrequent occasions on which this word occurs in the Bible, it would make equally good, or better, sense if it were translated as 'Arabs.' Herzl himself evidently had this passage in mind when, in reply to a question from Prince Hohenlohe concerning the existing inhabitants of Palestine, he referred to them as "Arabs, Greeks, all the *mixed multitude* of the Orient."

Jewish tradition, at any rate since the coming of Islam, has always regarded the Arabs as being fellow-descendants with themselves of the patriarch Abraham, the father of monotheism. They recognize, indeed, that the Ishmaelites (Arabs) would have been the natural heirs of Abraham if it had not been for the miraculous intervention of the Almighty in giving a son to Sara after her time for child-bearing was past. They also recognize that the rights of primogeniture would have belonged to Isaac's son Esau, ancestor of the Transjordanian Edomites, and so of Herod the Great,<sup>1</sup> if Jacob had not taken them from him by a trick. This story seems to be the acknowledgment of some suggestion that the ancestor of the Jews had in some way supplanted his brother. Commentators, however, generally justify Jacob's behaviour on the grounds of his superior capabilities when compared with his feckless brother. The operation in this case would thus be an earlier example of what the Permanent Mandates Commission, referring to the proposed establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, once called a "measure of higher

<sup>1</sup> Herod's father was an Idumean from the Beersheba neighbourhood; his mother was a Nabatean Arab.



justice." It is to be noticed, however, that when Esau complained to his father he was assured that, while he would be subjected to his younger brother for a while, "it shall come to pass when thou shalt break loose, that thou shalt shake his yoke from off thy neck."<sup>1</sup>

In Jewish tradition, dating from the early centuries of the Christian era, the Arabs, like the Romans, are generally represented as enemies of the Jews. Thus the Talmud records a dispute between a delegation of Ishmaelites (Arabs) and Jews in the presence of Alexander the Great. In this the Arabs, who have presented a claim that "the Land of Canaan is ours as well as yours," are confuted by Jewish dialectic.<sup>2</sup> The story, which is presumably entirely apocryphal, seems nevertheless to indicate that in the Talmudic period—*i.e.*, before A.D. 500—certain Arab claims in Palestine roused resentment in Jewish circles. A similar story is told with regard to the Samaritans, whose presence in the "Land of Israel" was quite certainly an old-established Jewish grievance.

Jewish legend further relates that when Nebuchadnezzar led the Jews into captivity their cousins, the Ishmaelites, tormented the thirsty prisoners in the desert by giving them salt food and then offering them skins inflated and painted to look as if they contained water. These were really full of nothing but hot air, which entered into the bowels of the Jews and killed them.

Jewish legend also relates that when Titus destroyed the Second Temple the most hostile to the Jews of his four army commanders was an Arab. This Arab, according to the story, urged the Romans to destroy the Temple utterly. When the Jews remonstrated he applied that he was giving them advice for their own good. "Because," he said, "as long as this Temple stands the Empires will be hostile to you, but if it is destroyed they will no longer be hostile." This remark may perhaps be intended to imply that as long as Judaism, composed as it is of religion, nationalism, and a claim to Palestine, exists, so long will anti-Semitism exist. The Jews, however, replied that they did not believe in the sincerity of the Arab's intentions.

In a story concerning the famous Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai (*circa* A.D. 75) Arabs are mentioned as a lowly people whose horses and cattle are to be found in Acre. Occasionally, however, an Arab is represented in a more favourable light, as arbitrating between Jews and giving due honour to the more worthy.

Sometimes, too, the Arab is a neutral figure, watching

<sup>1</sup> Genesis xxvii, 40.

<sup>2</sup> *Sanhedrin*, 91a.



impassively the vicissitudes of Jewish life. Such is the Arab who is reported to have informed a Jew that the Messiah had been born on the very day that the Temple was destroyed. The story is as follows. A Jew had set to work ploughing. As an Arab passed by the Jew's cow lowed. "Who are you?" asked the Arab. "A Jew," he replied. "Jew, Jew," said the Arab, "unharness your cow and untie the plough." "Why?" "Because the Temple of the Jews has been destroyed." "How do you know that?" "From the lowing of your cow." Meanwhile the cow lowed again. "Jew, Jew," said the Arab, "harness your cow, tie the plough, for behold the Messiah is born, Israel's saviour." Having learned that the child was in Bethlehem, the Jew sold his plough and his cow, and set forth as a pedlar selling children's clothing. On reaching Bethlehem he urged the child's mother to buy from him. On her refusing to do so because she had no money he offered to give her credit, saying that he would return after a time to collect the debt. When he returned, however, and inquired after the boy the mother told him that the child had been lost. "After you saw me," she said, "winds and storms came and snatched him from me; they swept him away with them." Here this sad, and rather mysterious, story ends, with no further mention of the Arab.<sup>1</sup>

In the Bible the name Arab is used from the time of King Jehoshaphat, between 900 and 800 B.C., to describe nomads from across the Jordan.<sup>2</sup> The Prophet Isaiah (*circa* 740 (?), 540 (?) B.C.) represents God as reproaching the Israelites for preparing a table (altar) for "Gad" and filling up mingled wine for "Meni." In all probability these are the pagan arab deities Gad and Manāt.

It is evident, then, that there was a considerable contact, from very early times, between Israelites and Arabs.

From the fourth century B.C. history refers to a people called the Nabateans, who lived in Transjordan. From the beginning of the last century before Christ the Nabatean kings controlled the country from south of Aqaba, on the Red Sea, through Transjordan and the Hauran, as far as Damascus, in the north. Nabateans were expert in collecting rain-water and utilizing it for agricultural purposes. They were also great merchants and controlled the spice trade from the East. The most remarkable monuments which they have left behind them are the imposing

<sup>1</sup> C. N. Bialik, *Sefer Ha-Aggada* (in Hebrew; Tel Aviv, 1934), vol. i, Book II, section 10, paragraph 20.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chronicles xvii, 11.



façades cut in the rock at Petra, in South Transjordan. The inscriptions of the Nabateans are written in Aramaic, but there are grounds for thinking that they spoke Arabic, and were themselves a kind of Arab. The commonest name in their royal family, Aretas, is identical with the famous Arab name el-Harith. A governor of a Nabatean king of this name was in charge of Damascus on the occasion of the conversion of the Apostle Paul ; and when we are told that the latter retired into " Arabia " this most probably means Nabatean territory—the Hauran, Jebel Druze, or Transjordanian.<sup>1</sup> The Nabatean kingdom lost its independence in A.D. 116 ; but the Arab tradition continued, and an Arab from Bosra, in the Hauran, was Roman Emperor from A.D. 244 to 249.<sup>2</sup> Early in the same century the Palmyran state, situated between Syria and Northern Iraq, rose to eminence ; for a few years it actually threatened Roman supremacy in the East. This state, like that of the Nabateans, was in many respects unmistakably Arab, and the language of the common people was probably Arabic. At the end of the third century Palmyra was destroyed, but the tradition of Arab influence on the frontier of the Roman Empire continued, as is proved by an inscription dating from A.D. 328. This is written in the Arabic language, the script being Nabatean. It contains the following :

" This is the tomb of Imru'l Qai's, King of all the Arabs . . . who appointed his sons over the tribes and sent them as delegates to the Persians and the Romans." <sup>3</sup>

In the fifth century the influence of the famous ascetic St Simon Stylites, who spent many years upon the top of a pillar in the hills of North Syria, near Aleppo, is known to have attracted great numbers of Arabs to Christianity.

During the fifth century occurred the rise to power of the Arab dynasty of Ghassan. These princes, whose capital was at Bosra, in the Hauran, attained a position of great importance in the Byzantine Empire. They were Christians who adopted the monophysite faith, of which they constituted themselves the defenders at the Imperial Court. The most famous of their kings bore the same name as so many Nabatean monarchs—el Harith—and he was surnamed " the Magnificent." He bore also the title of " Patrician," and was called the " illustrious friend of Christ." In the Byzantine Empire he enjoyed the rank of ' phylarch,' which was the highest after that of the Emperor. He

<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians xi, 32 ; Galatians i, 17 ; 2 Maccabees ii, 5, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately little information has survived concerning him.

<sup>3</sup> R. Dussaud, *Les Arabes en Syrie avant l'Islam* (Paris, 1907), p. 35.



more than once visited Constantinople, notably in the year 563, when the Byzantine capital was in the splendour of the reign of Justinian. He enjoyed the friendship of the Empress Theodora, and intervened decisively in favour of the monophysite faith, claiming to speak on behalf of "himself, his armies, and the men of the East."<sup>1</sup> While Christian in faith, the princes and people of Ghassan were intensely proud of their Arab race and culture. Certain orthodox Christian Arabs in the Hauran and the Lebanon boast to-day of their descent from the people of Ghassan.

During the sixth and seventh centuries the language which we now call classical Arabic was the spoken language of the Arab world from the Jordan to the Persian frontier, and from Mecca to Jebel Sinjar, in Northern Mesopotamia. For the Arabs it was the symbol of their unity, and the annual fair at Ukaz, in the Hejaz, at which poetry competitions were held, was in some respect the equivalent for the Arab world of the Olympic Games in classical Greece. And since Arab influence had been dominant in Eastern Syria for nearly a thousand years, and an Arab prince had recently been the highest official of the Byzantine Government in Syria, it is not surprising that when the teaching of the Arab Prophet Mohammed united the Arab world into a political and religious unit the capital of that Empire was soon transferred to Damascus.

As far as Palestine is concerned, the chief significance of the rise of Islam was the reintegration of all Syria, including Palestine, into the Semitic world and the loosening of the connexion with the West. This was emphasized by the prolonged warfare between the Muslim East and the Christian Occident, and it resulted in the gradual decay of what remained of the old Hellenistic civilization. The early Arab caliphs, however, had their capital at Damascus, and the vast sums which flowed into their treasury from all parts of the Arab Empire can hardly have failed to have a "general fructifying effect upon the economic life of the whole country."<sup>2</sup> It is to them that is due the building of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, a superb monument, in which the Arab sense of the decorative value of ornamentation, long traditional in Syria, reached perfection.

Arab national feeling undoubtedly played a great part in the early Islamic Empire, but from the beginning it was nevertheless subordinated to religion. With the passing of the capital to

<sup>1</sup> If he thought in Arabic, "men of the East" would be *ashsharqiyun*—the 'Saracens.'

<sup>2</sup> Royal Commission Report (1936), p. 129.



Bagdad it was further weakened, and with the course of time it disappeared. Such prestige as remained to Arabs, as Arabs, was largely due to their descent from the Prophet, or to the intimate connexion between Islam and the Arabic language and outlook. The basis of the world of Islam was religion, while temporal power passed to the most powerful or the most talented dynasty. Finally it reached the Turks, who never adopted the Arabic language, and who, while admiring the Arabs for their intellectual gifts, finally came to treat them with some disdain.

We need not here go further into the history of Islam. It suffices to note that Palestine became part of a vast Arabic-speaking cultural unit, which included, besides Arabia proper, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt. Like the rest of the Near East, Palestine suffered from the havoc wrought in the great Islamic centres by the Mongol invasion. It was the scene of constant fighting during the Crusading period. After a brief revival it was doomed under Turkish rule to several centuries of stagnation and neglect.

At the end of the eighteenth century a radical change began to occur in the whole Near East. This was initiated by the spread of ideas from Europe and the simultaneous decadence and modernization of Turkey and of the whole medieval politico-religious system.

The irruption of Napoleon Bonaparte into Egypt naturally accelerated this process. The departure of the French was followed by the rise to power of Mohammed Ali. In itself this was of little more significance than any other change of dynasty. New ideas, however, were in the air, among them the idea of states founded on nationality. Thus when Ibrahim Pasha, Mohammed Ali's son and Commander-in-Chief, had conquered the Hejaz and Syria, in addition to Egypt, he conceived the idea of forming a kingdom upon the basis of Arab nationality. "The Pasha," wrote a contemporary French observer,

openly announced his intention of reviving Arab nationality, of restoring a real fatherland to the Arabs, of admitting them to all posts both in internal administration and in the Army, and of making them into a self-reliant people, participating in the enjoyment of the public revenues as in the charges which the maintenance of the state necessitates.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Asad J. Rustam, *The Royal Archives of Egypt : The Origins of the Egyptian Expedition to Syria, 1831-1841* (Beirut, 1936), p. 94.



The Pasha's idea was perfectly clear. The conception of the state in the Near East under the Ottoman Empire was that of a number of communities, the members of each of which were bound together by a common faith. Above these a Governmental organization, identified on the religious side with the dominant community, fulfilled the task of preserving order, collecting the taxes, and controlling military and foreign affairs, while interfering as little as possible in the internal affairs of the individual groups. Each minority group, that is to say, had in relation to the Government the position which, for example, the Jewish communities in Europe had, in the days before their emancipation, in relation to the Government of the country in which they were situated. For this system Ibrahim proposed to substitute a homogeneous national state comparable to those of Europe. The link would, of course, be linguistic and cultural rather than racial, for the Arabic-speaking peoples were of very diverse racial origin. The difference from Europe would, however, be more apparent than real. For the Prussians are said to be Slavic by race, Great Britain and France are composed of very diverse racial elements, while Spain includes a variety of languages as well as races.

The conception nevertheless had not yet become familiar to the Arabs themselves, and Ibrahim's project appears to have found as little echo among them as that attributed to Bonaparte did among the Jews thirty years earlier. In part this may have been due to the fact that it meant substituting a national idea for the dominance of religion, and this appeared to reduce the relative importance of adherence to Islam, the religion of the majority. This is particularly evident in Palestine, where the Christians welcomed the Egyptian régime, while the Muslim peasantry, far from regarding Ibrahim as a national leader, broke out in open revolt against him. In 1834 Ibrahim, seeking recruits for his armies, decided to impose a form of conscription upon the Palestinians.<sup>1</sup> Palestine at that time was an almost entirely agricultural country, supporting a population of several hundred thousand peasants. The chief industry was the manufacture of olive-oil soap at Nablus.<sup>2</sup> The peasantry were Arabic-speaking and almost without exception Muslim. They were not, however, for the most part descendants of Bedouin Arabs. Basically they were probably the remains of the Canaanitish stock which had planted vineyards, hewn out cisterns, and made

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, vol. xviii, p. 182.

<sup>2</sup> *The Royal Archives of Egypt*, p. 73. Palestine exported 9000 kantars of olive-oil soap in the year 1799.



Palestine a garden centuries before either Israelites or Arabs had appeared upon the scene. Into this original stock had been absorbed (as there are still being absorbed to-day) members of all the various nationalities that have ever installed themselves in Palestine—Hittites, Israelites, Samaritans, Philistines, Arabs from Transjordan and the Hauran, a few Greeks, Crusaders, Lebanese, Egyptians, and in recent times Circassians and even Berbers from North Africa.<sup>1</sup> All these by the virtue of the Palestinian soil have been absorbed into the original stock, which once spoke Canaanite and its Phœnician and Hebrew dialects, then Aramaic, and now Arabic. If there exist an autochthonous 'Palestinian' nation it is these peasants. They survived the first Israelite invasion; they have watched the urban civilizations come and go. The Arabs gave them a new language, the Greeks and the Crusaders a few place-names.

When Ibrahim Pasha summoned their representatives and called for conscripts to form an army, in order, as he said, to defend the Muslims against the danger of invasion by Christian Powers, they did not believe him. They knew that he wanted soldiers to found an empire for his father and to fight against the Caliph. They therefore revolted. After an attack on Jerusalem, which had little effect beyond antagonizing the non-Muslim population, whose shops and houses were looted, they found themselves unable to face the regular troops in the field. They thereupon formed bands in the hills of Galilee, Samaria, and Judæa, effected successful ambushes, and cut the Jaffa road. In the end they were subdued, but they had shown that there existed a sort of peasant nation in Palestine who, though ordinarily obedient enough, would fight an alien Government if it pushed them too far.

A few years after this rebellion a revival of Arab sentiment, manifested in the first place as a literary renaissance, began to make itself apparent in the Near East. It first appeared among the Christian population of the Lebanon, notably in Beirut and among the Maronites. Primarily literary, it may be said to have become a definite political force from the day in the seventies of the last century when Ibrahim Yaziji recited, to a secret meeting of Arabs, his famous ode commencing "Arabs, awake!" From that moment the idea spread rapidly, in spite of the efforts of the Turkish Sultan Abdul Hamid to suppress it. Persecuted in Syria,

the Syrian and Lebanese intellectuals betook themselves to the hospitable valley of the Nile, carrying in their little notebooks and

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<sup>1</sup> At Deishun and other villages in Galilee.



in their hearts the great idea of the Arab renaissance. The movement, suppressed in Syria, displaced itself and reappeared elsewhere ; at Cairo, in newspapers and books ; throughout the Arabian peninsula, in insurrections.<sup>1</sup>

In 1904 Ibn Saoud rebelled and occupied Central Arabia ; in 1912 Sayyid el Idrisi attempted the same in the Yemen. In 1905 a committee was formed in Paris, entitled the " League of the Arab Fatherland." This committee issued a manifesto which envisaged the formation of an Arab kingdom, under an Arab constitutional monarch, in all the Asiatic territories of Arabic speech, with the exception of the Hejaz, with Medina. The latter were to form an independent territory whose sovereign would be Caliph of the Moslem world. " We will respect all foreign interests already engaged in our territory," said the manifesto, " and all the concessions granted up to date by the Turks. We shall respect the autonomy of the Lebanon, the *status quo* in the Christian sanctuaries in Palestine and in the independent principalities of the Yemen and the Persian Gulf." Thus the idea of an Arab kingdom, entirely independent of Turkey, was for the first time clearly formulated by an organized Arab movement.<sup>2</sup>

In 1908 the Turkish Revolution gave a great impetus to all the national movements within the Ottoman Empire, and for a while it was hoped to settle them in a friendly spirit, by a generous application of the principle of ' decentralization.' Soon, however, there was a reaction, and a scene in the Ottoman Parliament, in which an Arab member for Damascus struck the leader of the Committee of Union and Progress, led to the following letter being sent in 1911, with the approval of thirty-five Arab deputies, to the Emir Hussein, Sherif of Mecca :

The enemies of our language and of our nation, notably Khalil Bey, have declared to me that unless the Arabs act as they wish they will hang us from the scaffold like sheep in a slaughter-house. The rumours of these threats, reaching the representatives of the Arab people, caused them to protest so violently that the session was suspended. Your noble son, Abdullah, can tell you personally all the brutality of these vile creatures.

All the Arab deputies support you, Sire, with all the strength of their heart and their voice, full of gratitude for the services which you have rendered the Hejaz since you became its Chief. We

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<sup>1</sup> K. T. Khairallah, *Le Problème du Levant : Les régions arabes libérées : Syrie-Irak-Liban* (Paris, 1919), p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.



appreciate your zeal for our faith and our people. We are ready to rise with you, if you wish to shake off the yoke which weighs on the Arabs and to deliver them from tyranny and slavery.

I send you herewith a declaration signed by all those of our deputies who are sufficiently courageous to defend their nation, who recognize you as Caliph, alone responsible for the interests of all the Arab lands. This declaration witnesses a supreme resolution. Let what will come, come. Peace.<sup>1</sup>

In 1912 the Governor of Beirut warned the Turkish Government that the dissatisfaction of the people was causing them increasingly to turn to England and France. "Unless we take the initiative of reforms," he telegraphed to Istanbul, "the country will be lost to us."

Early in 1913 the agitation in Beirut assumed formidable proportions, and the Government was forced to release three notables whom it had arrested. On March 27, 1913, the *Temps* thus reported these events: "This movement, launched in spite of military law, will be difficult to stop, for it enjoys the sympathy not of the Vilayet of Beirut only, but of all the Arab provinces." On June 18 of the same year an Arab Congress assembled in Paris. Among those who signed the invitation to this Congress were Charles Debbas, afterwards first President of the Lebanese Republic, Jamil Bey Mardam, later Prime Minister of the Syrian Republic, and Auni Bey Abdul-Hadi, subsequently a member of the Arab Higher Committee in Palestine, and at one time exiled by the British Government. This Congress demanded "decentralized government for the Arab provinces, effective Arab representation in the central Government, and recognition of Arabic as an official language in the Arab provinces." It also expressed its sympathy with Armenian demands for a similar degree of autonomy.<sup>2</sup>

The position on the outbreak of war with Turkey has been described by Lawrence in his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.

The Sherif of Mecca, according to Lawrence, who was well qualified to know, was an honourable, shrewd, honest, and pious old man, whose principles led him to refuse the Turkish appeal to declare a Holy War against the Allies. On the other hand, every consideration induced him to listen to a proposal to initiate a revolt to establish Arab independence.

In January 1915 Yisin [Yasin], head of the Mesopotamian officers, Ali Riza, head of the Damascus officers, and Abdel Ghani el Areisi,

<sup>1</sup> Khairallah, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 48.



for the Syrian civilians, sent down to him a concrete proposal for a military mutiny in Syria against the Turks. The oppressed peoples of Mesopotamia and Syria, the committees of the Ahd and the Fetah,<sup>1</sup> were calling out to him as the father of the Arabs, the Moslem of Moslems, their greatest prince, their oldest notable, to save them from the sinister designs of Talaat and Jamal.

Prince Feisal, whom the Sherif sent to Damascus, reported

that local conditions were good, but that the general war was not going well for their hopes. In Damascus were three divisions of Arab troops ready for rebellion. In Aleppo two other divisions, riddled with Arab nationalism, were sure to join in, if the others began. . . . If the Allies landed their Australian Expedition (preparing in Egypt) at Alexandretta, and so covered the Syrian flank, then it would be wise and safe to risk a final German victory and the need to make a previous separate peace with the Turks. Delay followed, as the Allies went to the Dardanelles, and not to Alexandretta.

When Feisal later returned, after the Dardanelles campaign,

his Syrian supporters were under arrest or in hiding, and their friends being hanged in scores on political charges. He found the well-disposed Arab divisions either exiled to distant fronts, or broken up in drafts and distributed among Turkish units. The Arab peasantry were in the grip of Turkish military service, and Syria prostrate before the merciless Jamal Pasha.<sup>2</sup>

From another passage in the same book it appears that many of the Arab leaders

could see no advantage in supporting the Allies rather than the Turks, since they did not believe our assurances that we would leave them free. Indeed, many of them preferred an Arabia united by Turkey in miserable subjection to an Arabia divided up and slothful under the easier control of several European Powers in spheres of influence.

The British Government, for its part, believed itself strong enough to ignore the Arab movement, which, while it might help to defeat the Turks, might also prevent the Allies from disposing of the Arab lands to suit their own convenience when the War was won.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Arab nationalist secret societies.

<sup>2</sup> *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (London, 1935), Chapters IV-VI.

<sup>3</sup> The account given by George Antonius, in his book *The Arab Awakening* (London, 1938), suggests that the British Government was inadequately informed concerning the strength of the Arab movement in Iraq and Syria.



Early in the War the British Administration in Cairo formed the body known as the "Arab Bureau." This group of Englishmen, who all possessed considerable first-hand knowledge of the East, came, according to Lawrence, to the following conclusion :

We could see that a new factor was needed in the East. . . . No encouragement was given us by history to think that these qualities could be supplied ready-made from Europe. The efforts of European Powers to keep a footing in the Asiatic Levant had been uniformly disastrous, and we disliked no Western Power enough to inveigle them into further attempts. . . . Some of us judged that there was latent power enough and to spare in the Arabic people, a prolific Semitic agglomeration, great in religious thought, reasonably industrious, mercantile, politic, yet solvent rather than dominant in character. They . . . had begun to dream of liberty. . . . So we who believed we held an indication of the future set out to bend England's efforts towards fostering the new Arabic world in Hither Asia.

The first thoughts of the Arab Bureau were directed to Mesopotamia. Unfortunately the favourable opportunity was lost, owing to the miscalculation of the India Government as to the ease of the campaign and their desire to reserve Mesopotamia as a sort of colony for India, which led them to avoid making any promises of independence.

When the full difficulties of the War became apparent, however, the British authorities resumed the project of a rising in the Hejaz. This, they thought, would create difficulties for the Turks without committing the British Government to anything more than Arab independence in the Hejaz, on which the Allies had in any case no designs. The Arab movement, however, was now altogether too large to be ignored in this way, and the Government were inevitably led into commitments which, as they later truly stated, they had never intended to undertake. The negotiations were conducted between the Sherif of Mecca and the High Commissioner in Egypt. In response to suggestions from the latter the Sherif sent a formal letter to Sir Henry McMahon on July 14, 1915, declaring :

Whereas the whole of the Arab nation without any exception have decided in these last years to live, and to accomplish their freedom, and grasp the reins of their administration both in theory and practice ; and whereas they have found and felt that it is to the interest of the Government of Great Britain to support them and aid them to the attainment of their firm and lawful intentions



(which are based upon the maintenance of the honour and dignity of their life) without any ulterior motives whatsoever unconnected with this object ;

And whereas it is to their [the Arabs'] interest also to prefer the assistance of the Government of Great Britain in consideration of their geographical position and economic interests, and also of the attitude of the above-mentioned Government, which is known to both nations and therefore need not be emphasized ;

For these reasons the Arab nation see fit to limit themselves, as time is short, to asking the Government of Great Britain, if it should think fit, for the approval, through her deputy or representative, of the following fundamental propositions, leaving out all things considered secondary in comparison with these, so that it may prepare all means necessary for attaining this noble purpose, until such time as it finds occasion for making the actual negotiations :

Firstly. England to acknowledge the independence of the Arab countries, bounded on the north by Mersina and Adana up to the 37° of latitude, on which degree fall Birijik, Urfa, Mardin, Midiat, Jezirat (Ibn 'Umar), Amadia, up to the border of Persia ; on the east by the borders of Persia up to the Gulf of Basra ; on the south by the Indian Ocean, with the exception of the position of Aden to remain as it is ; on the west by the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea up to Mersina.<sup>1</sup>

In reply Sir Henry thanked the Sherif for his goodwill, and confirmed a message previously sent to the Sherif in which the British " desire for the independence of the Arabs and the Arab countries " had been stated.

With regard to the questions of limits and boundaries, it would appear to be premature to consume our time in discussing such details [*sic!*] in the heat of war, and while, in many portions of them, the Turk is up to now in effective occupation ; especially as we have learned, with surprise and regret, that some of the Arabs in those very parts, far from assisting us, are neglecting this their supreme opportunity and are lending their arms to the German and the Turk, to the new despoiler and the old oppressor.<sup>2</sup>

Sir Henry McMahon did not mention that his Government were themselves about to " consume their time " in discussing the future boundaries of Arab independence with their ally France, and arranging with her to assume the place to be vacated by the " old oppressor." It was, however, as we have seen, precisely because the Arabs suspected something of the sort that many of

<sup>1</sup> Hussein-McMahon Correspondence. Command 5957, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.



them saw no advantage in fighting on the Allied rather than the Turkish side.

On September 9 the Sherif replied, thanking Sir Henry for his letter.

Nevertheless your Excellency will pardon me and permit me to say clearly that the coolness and hesitation which you have displayed in the question of the limits and boundaries by saying that the discussion of these at present is of no use and is a loss of time, and that they are still in the hands of the Government which is ruling them, etc., might be taken to infer an estrangement or something of the sort.<sup>1</sup>

To this Sir Henry replied on October 24, informing the Sherif that he had received the following statement from the Government of Great Britain :

The two districts of Mersina and Alexandretta and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo cannot be said to be purely Arab, and should be excluded from the limits demanded.

With the above modification, and without prejudice to our existing treaties with Arab chiefs, we accept those limits.<sup>2</sup>

With a reservation on the British side concerning French interests in general and British interests in the Vilayets of Bagdad and Basra, and a reservation on the Sherif's side concerning the raising after the War of the claim to the districts west of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo, an agreement on this basis was reached early in 1916. Replying to a letter of the Sherif, dated New Year's Day, 1916, Sir Henry advised him that "I have received orders from my Government to inform you that all your demands are accepted."<sup>3</sup> On this basis the Arab Revolt was initiated in the Hejaz in June 1916. Though its effects were in no way comparable to those which wholehearted support of Arab aspirations on the part of the Allies might have brought about some months earlier, it nevertheless proved, according to Lord Allenby, "invaluable" to the British forces.

<sup>1</sup> Hussein-McMahon Correspondence. Command 5957, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> In 1918 the Turks tried to get the Arabs to enter into a separate treaty with them, on the basis of Turkish recognition of the independence of the Arab countries. The Sherif informed the British Government of this, and received the reply from the Foreign Secretary, then Mr Balfour, that "H.B.M.'s Government, in agreement with the Allied Powers, confirms its previous pledges respecting the recognition of the independence of the Arab countries."



Meanwhile the Anglo-Arab *entente* had the effect of intensifying Turkish repression in Syria and elsewhere. In September 1915 eleven Arab leaders had been hanged in the main square of Beirut, after trial by a court-martial expressly instituted at Aley, in the Lebanon. In May 1916 a further twenty notables were hanged in Beirut and Damascus for their "participation in the plot of this society whose aim is to tear Syria, Mesopotamia, and Palestine from the Ottoman Empire in order to erect an independent principality." Among those executed were two Palestinians—Ali Umar Nashashibi, of Jerusalem, and Mohammed Shanti, of Jaffa.<sup>1</sup> Worst of all was the deliberate starving of the Lebanon. Knowing the pro-Ally sympathy of the Lebanese, the Turks prevented the entry of wheat into the mountain, thus causing the death by starvation of tens of thousands of men, women, and children. In Palestine, also, Arabs were insulted, flogged, and hanged for their pro-Ally sympathy. As Allied proclamations penetrated to the population the people began increasingly to look forward to a period when, the War over, the Arab world, while preserving the unity it had enjoyed in Turkish times, would enjoy a very great measure of local autonomy, supervised by British advisers and leading rapidly to complete independence.

When at the conclusion of the War the Allies published the proclamation which we have already quoted, stating that their object was "the complete and definite freeing of the peoples so long oppressed by the Turks and the establishment of national Governments and Administrations deriving their authority from the initiative and free choice of the indigenous populations," the people of Syria were naturally confirmed in their belief. It was thus with incredulity and a sense of betrayal that the Palestinians observed the activities of the Zionist Commission, which appeared to prove the correctness of the rumours reaching them from abroad concerning British support of Zionist pretensions to the Holy Land. Since Palestine was, however, in their view clearly a portion of the Arab territories to which independence had been promised in the correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon and the Sherif, the negotiations concerning it were naturally left for the time being in the hands of the Sherif's representative, the Emir Feisal.

<sup>1</sup> Khairallah, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE MANDATORY SYSTEM

The Dismemberment of the Arab World—The Mandate—The White Paper of 1922

WE HAVE already seen that in an early project for the development of Arab autonomy within the Ottoman Empire the Arab leaders had expressed sympathy for the similar aspirations of the Armenians. At the end of the First World War, when it was hoped by the Arabs that the pledges given to the Sherif would be generously fulfilled, the Arab representative, the Emir Feisal, expressed his willingness to facilitate a general settlement by which the other peoples formerly forming part of the Ottoman Empire would also receive their independence.

At that moment Great Britain and France had a great opportunity to declare that their ultimate aim was a united Arab world, within the frontiers suggested by the Sherif, which undeniably corresponded to linguistic and cultural realities. They could then have set about organizing this area, forming its future administrators out of the best material available, including representatives of the minorities, and training its future army, while themselves meanwhile retaining temporary control of such areas as they considered necessary. In such circumstances there should have been no insuperable difficulty in establishing the Armenians in Cilicia and the Assyrians in their native mountains of Hakkari, north of Mosul. Those two unfortunate peoples would thus have been able to secure the opportunity for that national development which they desired and deserved. At the same time they would have had every reason to live in good relations with the Arabs, and the Arabs with them, on account of their utility as buffer-states between the Arab and the Turkish worlds. If such a large-minded solution had been attempted the Arabs might not have objected to an extensive autonomous Jewish settlement in Palestine. As it was, in the early days of 1919, before Arab hopes had been disappointed, the Zionist leader, Dr Weizmann, was brought by the good offices of General Allenby into contact with Emir Feisal. As the result of this



meeting the Arab memorandum to the Peace Conference contained the following passage :

In Palestine the enormous majority of the people are Arabs. The Jews are very close to the Arabs in blood, and there is no conflict of character between the two races. In principles we are absolutely at one. Nevertheless the Arabs cannot risk assuming the responsibility of holding level the scales in the clash of races and religions that have, in this one province, so often involved the world in difficulties. They would wish for the effective superposition of a great trustee, so long as a representative local administration commended itself by actively promoting the material prosperity of the country.

At a meeting of the Supreme Council the Emir Feisal is recorded to have stated that " Palestine, for its universal character, should be left on one side for the mutual consideration of all parties interested. With this exception he asked for the independence of the Arabic areas enumerated in his memorandum."

In January 1919 the Emir Feisal consented to sign, with Dr Weizmann, an agreement which the latter had drawn up concerning Zionist aims in Palestine.

Article IV stated :

All necessary measures shall be taken to encourage and stimulate immigration of Jews into Palestine on a large scale, and as quickly as possible to settle Jewish immigrants on the land through closer settlement and intensive cultivation of the soil. In taking such measures the Arab peasant and tenant farmer shall be protected in their rights and shall be assisted in forwarding their economic development.

A reservation added by the Emir Feisal stated that he could be bound by the agreement only if the Arabs were established in a united and independent Arab realm, as asked for in his manifesto of January 4, addressed to the British Secretary of State.

It has been stated by Mr St J. Philby that this agreement was repudiated by the Sherif, on whose behalf the Emir was acting, as soon as it was brought to his notice.<sup>1</sup> It is certainly doubtful how far the Emir would ever have been supported by Arab opinion if it had known of the document. In any case, as the Arabs were not established as Feisal had requested, it has only a historic interest. Nevertheless the various statements and the agreement

<sup>1</sup> *News Chronicle*, July 9, 1937.



are important as showing that the principal Arab representative was willing to admit a considerable degree of Jewish colonization provided that a representative local administration was set up and that Arab peasants and tenant farmers were not only protected, but also assisted in their economic development. It is also interesting that Dr Weizmann at that time found these provisions acceptable, and that he apparently had no doubt whatsoever of the right of Prince Feisal, as representing the pan-Arab movement, to lay down conditions on which Jewish colonization in Palestine should be permitted.

The reasons for the failure of Arab aspirations are clear. The Allied Governments were not convinced that the Arab movement was sufficiently strong or united to bring about the renaissance of the Semitic East to which the more optimistic members of the Arab Bureau seem to have looked forward. They believed, indeed, that the Arabs were so weak that their demands could be ignored, and that it would be more profitable for the Allies to partition the Arab world and administer directly those portions of it in which the British or the French had a special interest. The French Government, indeed, actively disliked not only the pan-Arab idea, but even the suggestion of any sort of independence in the more advanced Arab lands ; for French statesmen feared the repercussion that this would have in the Arab territories which they controlled in North Africa. There was, moreover, a traditional friendship, dating from Crusading times, between France and the Maronite Christians of the Lebanon, and the latter, though proud of their Arabic language, yet desired the Lebanon to be entirely independent of the Muslim world. The French Government therefore decided to create in the Lebanon a nominally independent, but in reality controlled, state. In order to give this state a semblance of reality and security the French authorities were led to add to the Maronite area proper, which contained about 400,000 Christians, an area containing about 400,000 Muslims. Strategic reasons then led them to demand control of the district lying between the Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon, centred on Baalbek. This at once brought France into direct conflict with the provisional Arab state, set up in Damascus, under the Emir Feisal, in accordance with the Hussein-McMahon agreement. The Emir had made every effort to maintain peace, and in response to a French ultimatum withdrew his troops. A few hundred men nevertheless who refused to retire fought an unsuccessful engagement at Meisaloun, in the Anti-Lebanon, against much superior forces and equipment. The French there-



upon put an end to the Syrian state, and themselves assumed control of all Syria. Having done this, they divided the country into six nominally distinct states in which separatist tendencies were fostered, while in reality the High Commissioner's office administered the whole country as one unit. Even so the result was not satisfactory. The country did not progress with the rapidity which was to be anticipated, and when in 1936 it was proposed that treaties should be substituted for the Mandate the whole area, though it had been reconstituted into only two states, in place of six, still lacked the cohesion, the organization, and (apart from the Mandatory forces) the army which would enable it to ensure its independence. Moreover, the Lebanese state seemed likely to be engaged in a customs war with the Syrian state; this would have been prejudicial to the latter and possibly ruinous to the former.

Farther north, in Cilicia, which is a border province between the Arab and the Turkish worlds, the French Government encouraged the 100,000 Armenians who had been deported, under barbarous conditions, during the First World War, to return, on the understanding that they would receive a sort of National Home there. They were, however, no sooner re-established than the French, placed between the Turkish opposition in the north, stimulated by the proposed complete dismemberment of Turkey, and a sullen and hostile Arab world on the south, gave up the attempt to hold Cilicia. The Armenians, abandoned to their fate, had no choice but to forsake their homes for a second time and to take refuge in the Arab world.<sup>1</sup> Here by the exercise of extreme tact they have slowly established themselves and built up friendly relations with the indigenous population.

In giving up Cilicia the French abandoned also the hill frontier of Syria, with its Arabic- and Syriac-speaking population, including the towns of Urfa, Mardin, and Nissibin.<sup>2</sup> They thus left a large Christian population to its fate, created a further refugee problem, and destroyed the last remnants of indigenous Christianity in that area. At the same time they cut off the great commercial city of Aleppo from its natural markets, and left the frontier of the Arab world open to invasion from the north.

To complete the picture of the post-War developments in the

<sup>1</sup> Owing to the Franco-Turkish agreements of 1938 and 1939, by which the Sanjak of Alexandretta was detached from Syria and handed over to the Turks, some thousands of Armenians who were settled there once again had to migrate southward into the Lebanon and Syria.

<sup>2</sup> See Paul de Veu, *La Passion de la Cilicie* (Paris, 1937).



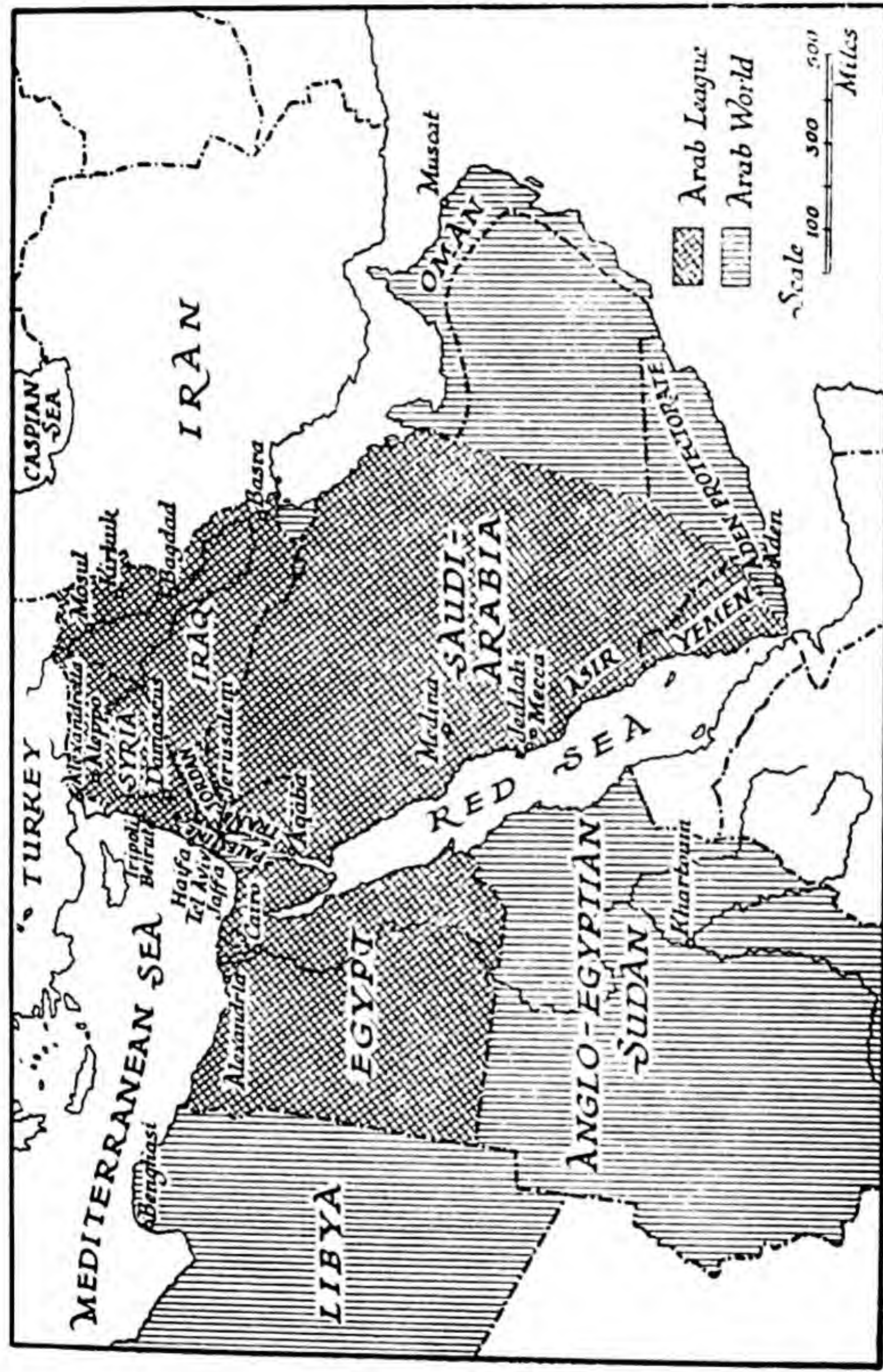
Arab world it will be convenient at this point briefly to consider the settlement which was imposed in the other Arab areas. In Iraq the British Government at first appeared, regardless of their promise, to be settling down to government of the regular colonial type. Faced, however, with a serious rising, they altered their policy, and within a few years set up a semi-independent state, with an administration, frontiers, and a degree of sovereignty which gave it the possibility of satisfactory development. They did, however, bequeath to the Iraq Government one serious problem which they had themselves created. This was the presence of a body of Assyrian Christian refugees who had been induced, by hopes of national independence, to rebel against the Turks during the First World War. For this reason the Assyrians had been compelled to abandon their ancestral home in Turkey, in the mountains north of Mosul. Being excellent fighters, they had been formed into levies under British officers and taught to consider themselves as a *corps d'élite* superior to the Iraqi soldiery. At the end of the War the British Government, unable to restore them to their homeland in Turkey and unwilling to take the responsibility of providing a new home for them, abandoned them in Iraq.<sup>1</sup> Here they formed an armed entity, cherishing a highly developed grievance because their nationalist sentiments had been aroused and not fulfilled. In these circumstances their presence constituted one of the chief problems facing the young Iraqi state. Their hopes having been further roused by the propaganda of certain well-meaning but misguided Englishmen, disorders, amounting in Iraqi eyes to rebellion, ensued; these were suppressed by the Iraqi army. During this operation a massacre of some 300 Assyrians took place. This was wholly deplorable, but in judging the occurrence local conditions have to be borne in mind, as, for example, the far fiercer repression frequently exercised by neighbouring states.

Now that the Assyrian nationalist agitation has ceased in Iraq, those of the community who remain there live on reasonably good terms with the Government and their neighbours.

It has been necessary to refer at some length to this episode, as it has been frequently quoted by enemies of the Arabs in order to raise prejudice against them. In reality the responsibility must be shared by the British Government, just as some responsibility for the disaster of the Armenians in Cilicia must be borne

<sup>1</sup> Mr Neville Chamberlain, then Prime Minister, declared in 1938 that it was impossible to settle the 30,000 Assyrians in any part of the British Empire without raising insuperable difficulties.





THE ARAB WORLD  
Excluding Tunis, Algeria, and Morocco

by the French. The course of post-War events in the Near East was, indeed, such as to make the Christian minorities, as well as the Muslim majorities, profoundly sceptical as to the sincerity of the war-time undertakings of the Allies. This has, however, had the advantage that it has encouraged Christians and Muslims to co-operate in defence of their common national interests. This is most noticeable in Palestine, but is also apparent in the new Syrian state, where the Christians (with the exception of the immigrant Syriac-speaking minority in the Jezirat ibn 'Umar) chose from the beginning to identify their interests with those of the majority, and rejected the proposal for the minority 'guarantees' of the League of Nations.

The course of post-War events made it apparent to the Sherif Hussein that the British Government had no intention of fulfilling the McMahon pledges in the sense in which the Arab negotiators had understood them. He thereupon adopted an intransigent attitude, on account of which another Arab prince friendly to Britain was permitted to expel the Sherifian family from the Hejaz. The Sherif himself was given asylum in Cyprus, where he later died. The British Government, however, did not wholly ignore the McMahon pledges: they treated them as far as possible as a personal obligation to the Sherifian family, and as little as possible as an engagement towards the Arab nation on whose behalf the Sherif had claimed to act.<sup>1</sup> They facilitated the election of the Emir Feisal as King of Iraq and of his brother, Abdullah, as Prince of Transjordan.<sup>2</sup>

One result of all these events, the occurrence of some of which we have somewhat anticipated, was that the Palestinian Arabs found themselves, for the first time in history, a distinct political unit, cut off from the rest of Syria.

It is therefore desirable, before proceeding further, to form some idea of the nature and characteristics of the Palestinian Arabs who were thus being formed into a separate entity.

The overwhelming majority of the inhabitants was still formed, as in 1834, by the more than half a million peasants who were closely identified with the Palestinian soil from which they uncomplainingly wrested a living. In some ways primitive, in others

<sup>1</sup> "Whereas the whole of the Arab nation, without any exception, have decided . . . to accomplish their freedom." Such was the opening of the Sherif's first letter to Sir Henry McMahon (July 14, 1915). (Cp. p. 84.)

<sup>2</sup> Thus the Palestine Royal Commission Report (1937) stated: "The Sherif and his family had gone far to realize [towards realizing?] their ambitions" (p. 26), and "Thus in the end the Royal family of the Hejaz had not fared ill" (p. 28).



highly sophisticated, their many admirable qualities have been recognized by all who know them. "The fellah is neither lazy nor unintelligent. He is a competent and capable agriculturist, and there is little doubt that, were he to be given the chance of learning better methods, and the capital, which is a necessary preliminary to their employment, he would rapidly improve his position."<sup>1</sup> Before the First World War the loyalty of the fellahin was directed partly to Islam and partly to the Palestinian soil. They were in 1919 little affected by pan-Arab ideas, though they were in every sense one with the fellahin who lived on the other side of the Jordan and in the adjacent portions of the Lebanon and Syria. Above the peasantry there was an aristocracy of land-owners, who had lived in the country for centuries, and were, in their way, as instinctively bound to it as the fellahin themselves. These included such families as the Abdulhadi's, the Tukan's, the Husseini's, the Nashashibi's, and the Khalidi's. While essentially Palestinian, these were educated people, familiar with the aspirations of the greater Arab world. Many of them had taken part in the Arab movement and had suffered severely for it. In Turkish times they were eligible for all posts in the administration, including the highest, throughout the Ottoman Empire. In Palestine nearly all officials were Arabs. There was also a middle class of shopkeepers, schoolmasters, and religious personages. These also were essentially Palestinians, but at the same time sympathized in a greater or lesser degree with Arab aspirations in general. The Arab Christian community formed a portion of the Palestinian world distinct in some respects from the Muslims. In Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Beit Jala, Ramallah, and Nazareth they constituted a great part of the population. For the most part they were descendants either of families which had been Christian since centuries before the Moslem invasion, or of Crusading families, long since assimilated to the local environment. These also were attached to the Holy Land by a very real bond, in which love of their homeland and religion played a great part. Hundreds of them emigrated to America, and, having prospered, returned to end their days in the land of their birth. In the mixed towns where there was a Muslim mayor a Christian would be his deputy. The Christians were also conspicuous in administrative posts, in the professions,

<sup>1</sup> Report by Sir John Hope Simpson (1930), p. 66: "The fellah is tremendously anxious for education for his children, and in one year alone the fellahin voluntarily contributed over LP.16,000 towards the building of schools in their villages."



and in commerce. They entertained the closest relations with the Christians of Syria, with whom they intermarried freely.

These various classes, then, were the people who, having been suddenly constituted into an independent nation, found themselves being administered "as a sacred trust of civilization" by the greatest Empire in the world, in such a way that, as far as they could see, there was nothing to prevent the Zionists from seeking to become the majority in the country, and in the course of time turn it into a Jewish commonwealth.

At first, it is true, the Arabs had considerable confidence in the Military Administration. This did its best to carry out the Hague Convention and to try to bring the activities of the Zionist Commission into line with General Allenby's proclamation to the people of Syria, which was the only official statement of British policy which had been published in Palestine. The Zionist Commission, however, strong in the knowledge of the support which it enjoyed in England and the backing of the so-called "Brandeis régime" in the United States of America, made no concessions. On the occasion of an outbreak of Arab feeling against Jews in 1920 matters came to a head, and General Bols, then Chief Administrator of Palestine, dispatched a strong report to General Headquarters in Cairo, in which he recommended the dissolution of the Zionist Commission. The report is so illustrative of the Palestinian problem as it has existed from that day to this that it deserves quotation at considerable length. Sir Louis Bols, who was obviously in complete ignorance of the manner in which Mr Lloyd George and Lord Balfour proposed to interpret the Balfour Declaration, wrote as follows :

I cannot allocate the blame to any section of the community or to individuals while their case is still *sub judice*, but I can definitely state that when the strain came the Zionist Commission did not loyally accept the orders of the Administration, but from the commencement adopted a hostile, critical, and abusive attitude. It is a regrettable fact that, with one or two exceptions, it appears impossible to convince a Zionist of British good faith and ordinary honesty.

They seek, not justice from the military occupant, but that in every question in which a Jew is interested discrimination in his favour shall be shown. They are exceedingly difficult to deal with. In Jerusalem, being in the majority, they are not satisfied with military protection, but demand to take the law into their own hands ; in other places where they are in a minority they clamour for military protection. . . .



It is unnecessary to press my difficulty . . . in controlling any situation that may arise in the future if I have to deal with a representative of the Jewish community [Mr Ussishkin was Vice-President] who threatens me with mob law and refuses to accept the constituted forces of law and order. . . .

It will be recognized from the foregoing that my own authority and that of every department of my Administration is claimed or impinged upon by the Zionist Commission, and I am definitely of opinion that this state of affairs cannot continue without grave danger to the public peace and to the prejudice of my Administration.

It is no use saying to the Moslem and Christian elements of the population that our declaration as to the maintenance of the *status quo* made on our entry into Jerusalem has been observed. Facts witness otherwise : the introduction of the Hebrew tongue as an official language ; the setting up of a Jewish judicature ; the whole fabric of government of the Zionist Commission of which they are well aware ; the special travelling privileges to members of the Zionist Commission ; this has firmly and absolutely convinced the non-Jewish elements of our partiality. On the other hand, the Zionist Commission accuse my officers and me of anti-Zionism. The situation is intolerable, and in justice to my officers and myself must be firmly faced.

This Administration has loyally carried out the wishes of His Majesty's Government, and has succeeded in so doing by strict adherence to the laws governing the conduct of the Military Occupant of Enemy Territory, but this has not satisfied the Zionists, who appear bent on committing the temporary military administration to a partialist policy before the issue of the Mandate. It is manifestly impossible to please partisans who officially claim nothing more than a " National Home," but in reality will be satisfied with nothing less than a " Jewish state " and all that it politically implies.

I recommend, therefore, in the interests of peace, of development, of the Zionists themselves, that the Zionist Commission in Palestine be abolished.<sup>1</sup>

The British Cabinet, however, was in no mood to accept this view. On the contrary, the Balfour Declaration was at once officially made known in Palestine for the first time, and not the Zionist Commission but the Military Administration was abolished. In its place a Civil Administration was set up, presided over by a Jewish High Commissioner, Sir Herbert Samuel, an experienced, fair-minded, and liberal administrator, but one whom the Colonial Secretary had himself recently described as

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Boustany, *The Palestine Mandate*, p. 136. This report appears never to have been officially published.



an "ardent Zionist," and who had, in fact, been one of the chief propagators of the Zionist idea in the War Cabinet.

The new Administration was inaugurated on July 7, 1920, by the reading of the following message from His Majesty King George V :

### TO THE PEOPLE OF PALESTINE

The Allied Powers, whose Arms were victorious in the late War, have entrusted to My Country a Mandate to watch over the interests of Palestine and to ensure to your Country that peaceful and prosperous development which has so long been denied to you.

I recall with pride the large part played by My troops under the command of Field-Marshal Lord Allenby in freeing your Country from Turkish rule, and I shall indeed rejoice if I and My people can also be the instruments of bringing within your reach the blessings of a wise and liberal administration.

I desire to assure you of the absolute impartiality with which the duties of the Mandatory Power will be carried out, and of the determination of My Government to respect the rights of every race and every creed represented among you, both for the period which has still to elapse before the terms of the Mandate can be finally approved by the League of Nations and in the future when the Mandate has become an accomplished fact.

You are well aware that the Allied and Associated Powers have decided that measures shall be adopted to secure the gradual establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish People. These measures will not in any way affect the civil or religious rights or diminish the prosperity of the general population of Palestine.

The High Commissioner whom I have appointed to carry out these principles will, I am confident, do so wholeheartedly and effectively, and will endeavour to promote in every possible way the welfare and unity of all classes and sections among you.

I realize profoundly the solemnity of the trust involved in the government of a Country which is sacred alike to Christian, Moham-medan, and Jew, and I will watch with deep interest and warm sympathy the future progress and development of a State whose history has been of such tremendous import to the World.

It will be noticed that the British right to administer Palestine is not founded in this message on the right of conquest. On the contrary, it is merely said, with remarkable modesty, that "freeing your Country" was due to the "large part" played by His Majesty's troops. Emphasis is placed on the need of securing the "welfare and unity of all classes and sections among



you," and on the intention that the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people shall be gradual. The Arabs, though not mentioned by name, are recognized as constituting the "general population" of the country. It is noteworthy also, in view of later claims, that the message, which was addressed to the existing population, of whom 90 per cent. were Arabs, and not to the Jewish people as a whole, pointedly refers to Palestine as "your Country." The proclamation, indeed, distinguishes quite definitely between the "Jewish People" and the "general population" of the country in which the National Home was to be established.

The mention of "a Mandate" was a reference to negotiations then proceeding in Europe concerning the future of Palestine. One of the fourteen points laid down by the President of the United States of America and accepted by the Allied Powers had stated that the

Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development.

Faced with the determination of the victorious Powers—in particular England, France, Italy, and Greece—to retain control of portions of former Ottoman territory, President Wilson had compromised by accepting the establishment of a Mandatory system. Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations stated that

peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world [should be entrusted as] a sacred trust of civilization, to advanced nations, who, by reason of their resources, their experience, or their geographical position, can best undertake this responsibility . . . and that this tutelage should be exercised by them as Mandatories on behalf of the League.

It further stated that

certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized, subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory.



In no case were adequate steps taken to fulfil the latter condition, but three Mandates were nevertheless eventually issued on this basis—Iraq, Syria with the Lebanon, and Palestine with Trans-jordan.

It was on the strength of a promise on the part of the principal Allied Powers that a Mandate for Palestine should be given to Great Britain that the Civil Administration was established. Since this arrangement, however, had still to be submitted for the approval of the League of Nations, and since no peace treaty had yet been signed with Turkey, the action had no legal validity, and was, in fact, a violation of international conventions.

More serious than the question of its legal validity was the fact of the undoubted hostility of the population of the country to which the Mandate was to be applied. This hostility was recorded in emphatic language by an American (King-Crane) commission of investigation which was sent to Palestine by President Wilson. It had, moreover, been brought to the attention of all the world by two serious outbreaks of violence, one of which occurred in 1919 and the other (to which General Bols's report alludes) in 1920. In the course of the latter forty-seven Jews had been killed and one hundred and forty-six wounded. Forty-eight Arabs were also killed, mostly in the course of the repression, but some by Jews. A Committee of Inquiry reported that

the fundamental cause of the Jaffa riots and the subsequent acts of violence was a feeling among the Arabs of discontent with, and hostility to, the Jews, due to political and economic causes and connected with Jewish immigration, and with their conception of Zionist policy as derived from Jewish exponents.

In spite of these warning signs the Government in London and the Zionist Organization, observing that the pan-Arab movement had for the time being collapsed, continued their discussions on the future of Palestine without any further consultation of Arab opinion in general or of the Palestinian Arabs in particular. Dr Weizmann, in particular, appears to have made no mention of the agreement which the Emir Feisal had been persuaded to sign.<sup>1</sup>

In our study of the early history of the organized Zionist movement we have seen that its established policy had been, whenever circumstances seemed to demand it, to disavow any

<sup>1</sup> This agreement was first produced by Dr Weizmann after the rising of 1936, apparently in the hope of persuading public opinion in England that the Emir Feisal would not have been in sympathy with Arab objections to the policy of the British Government as manifested in Palestine from 1922 to 1936.



desire to constitute a Jewish state, but to secure the three points which were the necessary preliminary to its establishment. These three points were the following: (i) The securing of some sort of legal basis, guaranteed by one or more Powers, for the recognition of Palestine as the Jewish homeland; (ii) the right of introducing as many Jews into Palestine as could be maintained in it, either by the resources of the country or by external aid; (iii) the right of organizing these Jews on a national basis. The last provision implied the formation of an organization which would act as a Government in Jewish internal affairs, and which would be ready to take over all the responsibilities of government when the occasion arose.

Though this Zionist interpretation had never been accepted in any declaration of the British Government, the latter had in the Balfour Declaration expressed sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations. At the same time, the official assurances given to the Arab leaders had never been withdrawn, nor had the declared aims of Allied war policy in the Near East, repeatedly proclaimed in Palestine and elsewhere, ever been disowned. The task which faced the new High Commissioner was therefore rather complicated. On the one hand, it was necessary to issue what he described as "reassuring statements" to the Arabs,<sup>1</sup> and, on the other, to do nothing to prevent the Jews from advancing steadily towards their goal of an ultimate Jewish majority. This was, in fact, the policy which was to be pursued in Palestine with great persistency, certainly until the MacDonald White Paper of 1939, and, according to the Arab delegates to the London Conference, even in that document.

Meanwhile, however, the Palestinians were themselves taking such measures as they could in order to defend their rights and their position. They formed a joint delegation of Palestinian Muslims and Christians, which proceeded to London in order to lay the Palestinian point of view before the British Government. Apart from the claim founded on national right, they based their demand for self-government on the promises made to the Arabs in the Hussein-McMahon correspondence. Mr Winston Churchill, at that time Colonial Secretary, claimed that Palestine was excluded from the promise on the grounds that it was a portion of Syria lying to the west of "the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo." Not until another seventeen years had passed did the Government officially recognize

<sup>1</sup> Sir Herbert Samuel, *Report on the Administration of Palestine, 1920-25*, p. 26.



the Arab objection to this fantastic argument as "having greater force than has hitherto appeared." Government and Zionist controversialists now depend instead either upon Sir Henry McMahon's statement (made in a letter to *The Times* on July 23, 1937) that, whatever he may have written, he never intended to include Palestine in the area promised, or else upon the reservation concerning areas of French interests.<sup>1</sup> The visit of the delegation did, however, result in the issue of an official interpretation of the Mandate before the latter had been ratified by the Council of the League (Command 1700). Since, however, the White Paper in which this interpretation is embodied is in the nature of a commentary upon the Mandate, it will be better to consider the latter first.

The Mandate begins with a preamble which states that the administration of the territory of Palestine is to be entrusted to a Mandatory for the purpose of giving effect to the provisions of Article 22 of the Covenant of the League. Having directed this "reassuring statement" to the "general population," the preamble continues that it has also been agreed that the Mandatory shall be responsible for putting into effect the Balfour Declaration, thus giving recognition to the historical connexion of the Jewish people with Palestine and to the grounds for reconstituting their National Home in that country. The logic of this latter sentence is not very clear. It appears, however, to be intended to give a sort of general approval to the Zionist case.

After stating that the Mandate had been entrusted to His Britannic Majesty the terms of the Mandate were defined in twenty-eight Articles. The following are essential :

I. The Mandatory shall have full powers of legislation and of administration, save as they may be limited by the terms of this Mandate.

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<sup>1</sup> So far as the present writer is aware, Sir Henry McMahon himself has never explained how he reconciled his alleged intention with what he actually wrote. A study of the Sykes-Picot agreement, however, suggests that by means of a seemingly innocuous reservation concerning "the territories in which the British Government is free to act without detriment to the interests of her ally France" Sir Henry intended to exclude from the area of Arab independence not only Palestine, but also Damascus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, Deir el Zor, the Gezira, and Mosul, together with all the territories adjacent to them. It is, of course, absolutely impossible that the Sherif could have understood the reservation in this sense, for it would have been incompatible with his declared aim of securing the independence, "both in theory and practice," of the great centres of Arab culture which were situated in the "Fertile Crescent." Such an interpretation would also be incompatible with the assurances which were given to the Sherif by the British Government. (Cf. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, pp. 250-258, 431-434.)



II. The Mandatory shall be responsible for placing the country under such political, administrative, and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish National Home, as laid down in the preamble, and the development of self-governing institutions, and also for safeguarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine, irrespective of race and religion.

IV. An appropriate Jewish Agency shall be recognized as a public body for the purpose of advising and co-operating with the Administration of Palestine in such economic, social, and other matters as may affect the establishment of the Jewish National Home and the interests of the Jewish population in Palestine, and, subject always to the control of the Administration, to assist and take part in the development of the country.

The Zionist Organization, so long as its organization and constitution are in the opinion of the Mandatory appropriate, shall be recognized as such agency. It shall take steps in consultation with His Britannic Majesty's Government to secure the co-operation of all Jews who are willing to assist in the establishment of the Jewish National Home.

VI. The Administration of Palestine, while ensuring that the rights and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced, shall facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions and shall encourage, in co-operation with the Jewish Agency referred to in Article IV, close settlement by Jews on the land, including State lands and waste lands not required for public purposes.

VII. The Administration of Palestine shall be responsible for enacting a nationality law. There shall be included in this law provisions framed so as to facilitate the acquisition of Palestinian citizenship by Jews who take up their permanent residence in Palestine.

XI. . . . The Administration may arrange with the Jewish Agency mentioned in Article IV to construct or operate, upon fair and equitable terms, any public works, services, and utilities, and to develop any of the natural resources of the country, in so far as these matters are not directly undertaken by the Administration. Any such arrangements shall provide that no profits distributed by such Agency, directly or indirectly, shall exceed a reasonable rate of interest on the capital, and any further profits shall be utilized by it for the benefit of the country in a manner approved by the Administration.

XXII. English, Arabic, and Hebrew shall be the official languages of Palestine. Any statement or inscription in Arabic or stamps or money shall be repeated in Hebrew, and any statement or inscription in Hebrew shall be repeated in Arabic.



Transjordan, contrary to the original intention, was included in the Mandate. In order, however, to fulfil the promise made in the Hussein-McMahon agreement, which the British Government themselves recognized as binding for the territory east of the Jordan, Article XXV of the Mandate enabled the Mandatory to withhold the application of such of its provisions as he might consider inapplicable to that area.<sup>1</sup>

It is, in fact, evident that the word "Palestine" in the Balfour Declaration could refer only to that area defined as Palestine in the Sykes-Picot agreement. The Cabinet had not been free to act in any larger area. Palestine, as thus defined, excluded not only all Transjordan and the present extension to the north of Huleh, but also the whole of the Beersheba area. In December 1918 the Cabinet Eastern Committee passed a resolution recommending that these frontiers should be readjusted. Speaking at the Cabinet meeting which discussed the matter, Lord Curzon said, "We are undoubtedly face to face with a movement which is growing on the part of the Zionists that Palestine is now to include what it certainly has not included for many generations, if it ever did."<sup>2</sup>

The preamble and the articles of the Mandate had the effect in the first place of establishing Palestine west of the Jordan

<sup>1</sup> The inclusion of Transjordan, under these conditions, was considered by the Zionists at the time as a success. Dr Weizmann, answering an interpellation at the Zionist Congress of 1921, stated, "The Mandate has now been published, and cannot henceforward be altered, except in one respect. Transjordan, which in the first text of the Mandate was outside the sphere of the Mandate, is now included in the Mandate. By this means, Herr Van Lieme, the question concerning the eastern frontier has been in part answered. The question will be still better answered when Cisjordan is so full of Jews that a way is forced into Transjordan."—*Der XIIte Zionisten Kongress*.

<sup>2</sup> D. Lloyd George, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*, vol. ii, p. 455. The boundaries asked for by the Zionist delegation to the Peace Conference in their memorandum of February 3, 1919, included Palestine, west and east of the Jordan, and Southern Lebanon. The text reads:

"The boundaries of Palestine shall follow the general lines set out below:

"Starting on the North at a point on the Mediterranean Sea in the vicinity South of Sidon and following the watersheds of the foothills of the Lebanon as far as Jisr el Karaon, thence to El Bire, following the dividing-line between the two basins of the Wadi el Korn and the Wadi el Teim, thence in a southerly direction following the dividing-line between the Eastern and Western slopes of the Hermon, to the vicinity West of Beit Jenn, thence Eastward following the northern watersheds of the Nahr Mughaniye close to and west of the Hedjaz Railway.

"In the East a line close to and West of the Hedjaz Railway terminating in the Gulf of Akaba.

"In the South a frontier to be agreed upon with the Egyptian Government.

"In the West the Mediterranean Sea."



as a separate political unit, thus further breaking up and partitioning the Arab world. Whereas before the First World War an Arab living in Jerusalem could freely visit his relations in Damascus or Beirut, he now required to procure a passport from the British Mandatory Administration in Palestine, and a visa from the French Mandatory Administration in Syria. In the second place, it gave recognition to the general validity of the Zionist claim to found a Jewish 'home' in the area thus constituted. Article I, by what it omitted to say, freed the Mandatory from any immediate obligation to consider the wishes of the majority of the population or to act according to them.<sup>1</sup>

Article II provided for the establishment of the "Jewish National Home, as laid down in the preamble." This provision must presumably be interpreted to mean "on the lines of the Zionist programme." The provisions of the same article for the "development of self-governing institutions, and also for safeguarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine, irrespective of race and religion," have always been claimed by Zionists to be subordinate to the provision for the establishment of the National Home. By this they mean that self-governing institutions, effectively representing the will of the majority, could not be set up as long as this might hinder the carrying out of the first half of the Article, concerning the establishment of the National Home as envisaged by Zionist policy. In practice this was interpreted as meaning that they could not be set up until there was a Jewish majority.

Article IV envisaged the formation of a Jewish Agency which would organize the Jews as a national body, and so become a Jewish Government within the Mandatory Government. At the same time it was to be an international organization, exerting political pressure in more than one country and drawing funds from many.

Article VI made the facilitation of immigration and the close settlement of Jews on the land subject to the precedent condition of "ensuring that the rights and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced." To the ordinary man this would seem a substantial safeguard. Zionist dialectic, however, is capable of demonstrating that it does not mean what it seems

<sup>1</sup> Article I of the Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon, on the contrary, stated, "The Mandatory shall frame, within a period of three years from the coming into force of this Mandate, an organic law for Syria and the Lebanon. This organic law shall be framed in agreement with the native authorities and shall take into account the rights, interests, and wishes of all the populations inhabiting the said territory."



to do, and the Royal Commission itself, after having heard the Jewish evidence on the subject, stated in its Report that the Arabs, under the Mandate, had no legitimate grievance on the subject of immigration, although the immigration had, according to the Commission's own statement, been conducted on a principle which was "inadequate and ignores factors in the situation which wise statesmanship cannot disregard."<sup>1</sup> It thus appears that the seeming safeguard of Article VI was more of a "reassuring statement" than a provision possessing practical significance.

Article XI, dealing with concessions which might be given to the Jewish Agency, is typical of the ambiguity of the Mandate. While not appearing to say so, it enabled the Zionists to secure all the practical advantages which they required. "In quarters in which Zionist aspirations were regarded with unqualified sympathy," says the *Political Report of the Zionist Executive to the Twelfth Zionist Congress*,<sup>2</sup> describing the negotiations which preceded the issue of the Mandate,

the view was almost unanimously taken that it was neither possible on general grounds, nor desirable in the interests of the Zionist movement itself, to provide in the Mandate for the conferment upon the Zionist Organization of anything savouring of an economic monopoly. There could be no doubt that Zionist co-operation in the economic development of the country would, in practice, be welcomed, and that Zionists would have every opportunity of participating in it to the full extent of their resources. On the other hand, the concession in terms of far-reaching privileges, while in itself adding little of practical value, would excite opposition which there was no advantage in gratuitously challenging, and might even be plausibly represented as inconsistent with the Covenant of the League of Nations.

The Jewish is the only section of the population which is specifically named in the Mandate. Arabs are referred to as "other sections of the population" or the "existing non-Jewish communities." The country, in fact, was treated as if it were a conglomeration of communities, of which the Jewish was to be given a privileged position. For it was put in a position to prevent the establishment of a democratic Government until such time as it acquired a numerical majority; it was to be permitted to increase by immigration until it did acquire such a majority; and it was authorized to encourage any person, in any part of the

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Royal Commission (1936), pp. 300 and 365.

<sup>2</sup> P. 32.



world, who "professed and called himself a Jew" to participate in an organization whose function was to assist and co-operate with the Government in all matters affecting the establishment of the Jewish National Home—that is, in all the affairs of the country. And the Hebrew language, which was still largely to be created and to be taught to those who were to speak it, was declared an official language. This Mandate was issued without as much as a reference to the Arab nation—whether the Arab nation as a whole or that portion of it which constituted the Palestinian nation established by the Mandate—which was more vitally concerned in it than any of the fifty-odd nations represented in the League. On account of this fact the British House of Lords, after debating the Mandate, refused its approval. Its sentiment may be summed up in the statement made in the House of Lords on March 27, 1923, by the late Lord Grey. Lord Grey, who had been Foreign Secretary at the time of the Hussein-McMahon agreement, said :

I seriously suggest to the Government that the best way of clearing our honour in this matter is officially to publish the whole of the engagements relating to the matter, which we entered into during the War. . . . I think that we are placed in a considerable difficulty by the Balfour Declaration itself. . . . It promised a Zionist home without prejudice to the civil and religious rights of the population of Palestine. A Zionist home, my Lords, undoubtedly means or implies a Zionist Government over the district in which the home is placed, and as 93 per cent. of the population are Arabs, I do not see how you can establish other than an Arab Government without prejudice to their civil rights. That one sentence alone of the Balfour Declaration seems to involve, without overstating it, exceedingly great difficulty of fulfilment. . . . I do see that the situation is an exceedingly difficult one, when it is compared with the pledges which undoubtedly were given to the Arabs. It would be very desirable, from the point of view of honour, that all those various pledges should be set out, side by side, and then, I think, the most honourable thing would be to look at them fairly, see what inconsistencies there are between them, and having regard to the nature of each pledge and the date at which it was given, with all facts before us, consider what is the fair thing to be done.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately the Government did not take Lord Grey's advice, but continued to carry out what amounted to a purely Zionist policy.

The "general population" of Palestine, constituted into a

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *An Appeal*, issued by the Arab National League (New York ; April 1938).



national unit by the Mandate, at once made it clear that it absolutely refused to commit national suicide in the manner envisaged by the Mandate.

Now the British Government, by expressing its sympathy with the aims of Zionism, had committed itself not only to the policy of preparing the way for a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine, but also to the policy of denying that anyone other than "those suffering from gross ignorance, or actuated by malice,"<sup>1</sup> could accuse it of purposing to establish a Jewish state. Confronted with the unanimous opposition of the Palestinian Arab population, the British Government issued an official commentary upon the Mandate before the latter had been ratified. This is the White Paper of 1922, for twenty years the most authoritative and famous of the various "reassuring statements" which constitute the stations on the Via Dolorosa leading to the Mandatory Calvary.

This document, which is associated with the name of Mr. Winston Churchill, claimed that the apprehensions of the Arab population were "partly" based upon "exaggerated interpretations" of the meaning of the Balfour Declaration.<sup>2</sup> It was not, said the Colonial Secretary, intended to create a wholly Jewish Palestine, nor that Palestine should, as Dr Weizmann had informed the Supreme Council, "become just as Jewish as America is American and England is English."<sup>3</sup> Nor had the disappearance or the subordination of the Arabic population, language, or culture in Palestine ever been contemplated. Not Palestine as a whole was to be converted into a Jewish National Home, but such a home was to be founded in Palestine. Attention was called to a resolution of the Zionist Congress in 1921 expressing "the determination of the Jewish people to live with the Arab people on terms of unity and mutual respect, and together with them to make the common home into a flourishing community, the upbuilding of which may assure to each of its peoples an undisturbed national development." The inclusion of Palestine in the Hussein-McMahon agreement was then denied, on the peculiar grounds which have already been mentioned. The

<sup>1</sup> See p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Mr Churchill omitted to mention what the other part of their basis was.

<sup>3</sup> In giving evidence before the Royal Commission Dr Weizmann endeavoured to modify the impression made by this phrase by changing it into "to build up something in Palestine which will be as Jewish as England is English." The Commissioners accepted this emendation, and Sir Laurie Hammond actually rebuked an Arab witness for quoting the better-known version. The latter is given, on the authority of Dr Weizmann himself, in the *Political Report of the Zionist Executive to the Twelfth Zionist Conference*, p. 22. Cf. *Royal Commission Minutes of Evidence*, p. 36 and paras. 4702 and 4703.



"fostering" of a full measure of self-government was promised for a future date; meanwhile a Legislative Council, in which the official, together with the Jewish, members would have a majority, was promised. The Secretary of State then pointed out that the control of Muslim religious endowments and of the Muslim religious courts had already been transferred to a Supreme Council elected by the Muslim community of Palestine. This apparent concession really meant that the Muslim majority had been reduced to the same level as, for example, the Armenian or the Latin Christian communities. Moreover, since the Muslim community, unlike the Jewish, was not mentioned by name in the Mandate, nor granted special privileges, it had, in fact, been allotted a status inferior to that of the Jewish community. The Arabs, observing that none of the "reassuring statements" were accompanied by adequate practical guarantees, rejected the document. "The fact is," they wrote,

that H.M.G. has placed itself in the position of a partisan in Palestine of a certain policy which the Arab cannot accept because it means his extinction sooner or later. Promises avail nothing when they are not supported by actions, and until we see a real practical change in the policy of H.M.G. we must harbour the fears that the intention is to create a Jewish National Home to the "disappearance or subordination of the Arabic population, language, and culture in Palestine."<sup>1</sup>

The Zionists, after careful consideration, accepted it. For this there was good reason. We have seen that the one Article of the Mandate which appeared to give real protection to the Arabs was Article VI. This definitely made immigration subordinate to the rights and position of the non-Jewish sections of the population. Now the White Paper, in speaking of the need of Jewish immigration, in order to fulfil the policy of developing the existing Jewish community, stated:

This immigration cannot be so great in volume as to exceed whatever may be the economic capacity of the country at the time to absorb new arrivals. It is essential to ensure that the immigrants should not be a burden upon the people of Palestine as a whole, and that they should not deprive any section of the present population of their employment.

Out of this seemingly innocent paragraph there was established the so-called "principle of the economic absorptive capacity of

<sup>1</sup> Command 1700 (1922), pp. 22-28.



the country." This was interpreted to mean that it was incumbent upon the Government to admit Jewish immigrants in whatever numbers they wished to come provided only that they did not immediately and directly "fall upon the rates." All other considerations were disregarded.<sup>1</sup> All psychological considerations, such as allowing time for the immigrants to adapt themselves to the outlook and customs of the existing population, were ignored. Nor was any importance given to the great strain which must be put upon the existing Arab social and economic organization by the sudden adjustment to the immigration.

The practical result of the White Paper, then, was the elimination of the one safeguard which the Mandate offered to the Arabs.

This was clearly expressed by the Jewish lawyer Mr Leonard Stein in his discussion, before the Royal Commission, of the meaning of Article VI of the Mandate. The majestic sentence in which he summed up his conclusions reads as follows :

My suggestion would be, summing it up, that inasmuch as "position" is not a known term, to which a well-known meaning can be attached, inasmuch as it is not a term of art, inasmuch as there is that official statement with reference to immigration, which was communicated to the League Council immediately before the confirmation of the Mandate, and inasmuch as there you do find a perfectly express reference to the principles on which immigration is to be regulated, further, inasmuch as you there find that the only restrictions which are referred to—there are certain restrictions specifically mentioned, but the only restrictions referred to in those passages I have just read being purely economic restrictions based on the economic capacity principle—taking all those considerations together, one is justified in drawing the conclusion that the proper construction of the phrase "while ensuring that the position"

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<sup>1</sup> Thus from 1926 to 1928 immigrants were actually admitted at a time when the Government was supplying relief work for Jewish labourers already in the country (*Memoranda prepared by the Government of Palestine for the Royal Commission*, p. 141, Section 9). From 1933 to 1936 very large labour schedules were granted to supply vacancies created by the fact that the Government was artificially providing work for Jewish labour at far higher rates than it would have been necessary to pay to the Arab labour which was available in excess (*Ibid.*, Section 13). In 1936, after the outbreak of the disturbances, an exceptionally large labour schedule was demanded by Dr Weizmann, and an exceptionally high percentage of his demand was granted, at a period when for over six months already, according to the official report of the Jewish Agency, the latter had been "obliged to take all possible measures in order to prevent the outbreak of a disastrous and destructive crisis and the growth of unemployment to catastrophic proportions" (*Report of the Zionist Organization to the Twentieth Zionist Congress* (Jerusalem, 1937), p. 384).



(and I will leave out "rights" for the moment) "the position of the other sections of the population shall not be prejudiced," or "is not prejudiced," the proper construction of that phrase is that it is essential to ensure that immigration should not be a burden upon the people of Palestine as a whole—that is, that immigrants should not come in and fall on the rates and that they should not deprive any section of the present population of their employment.<sup>1</sup>

The White Paper had spoken of the establishment of a Legislative Council. Since this was designed to give the Government and the Zionists a certain majority by the aid of the official members, the Palestine Arab delegation replied that they could not accept the proposal. It would only, they said, have the effect that the "Zionist policy of the Government will be carried out under a constitutional guise, whereas at present it is illegal, against the rights and wishes of the people, and maintained by force of arms alone."<sup>2</sup> A few months later the Colonial Secretary, in reply to the protests of the Arab delegation against the privileged position allotted to the Jewish Agency, offered the Arabs the right to establish an Arab Agency. Now the Jewish Agency was a function of the world-wide Zionist Organization: it maintained an elaborate and costly administrative apparatus in order to serve as a Jewish Government within Palestine and to act as a link between it and world Jewry. The Arabs had no need for any such organization: they already paid their taxes to the Palestinian Government, and it was not apparent why they should set up a duplicate organization. Moreover, the conditions attached to the offer were such as to render its acceptance the equivalent of a complete surrender, for the members of the Agency were to be nominated by the High Commissioner, who, though he had won the respect of the Arabs, was himself a Zionist, and the offer was conditional on its being understood that acceptance signified the settlement of all Arab claims, together with Arab recognition of the Balfour Declaration and all that it implied.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Royal Commission Minutes of Evidence, p. 256. Mr Churchill has since stated in the House of Commons (November 24, 1938) that, as far as his memory serves him, he did not intend, when coining the phrase "economic absorptive capacity," to exclude other considerations. If this is so it seems, in the words of a phrase used by the Royal Commission in another context, "in the highest degree unfortunate" that the Colonial Office, in a matter of such importance, were "unable to make their intention clear."

<sup>2</sup> *Palestine Correspondence with the Palestine Arab Delegation and the Zionist Organization.* Command 1700, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Proposed Formation of an Arab Agency.* Command 1989, p. 3.

In these circumstances the Colonial Secretary failed to achieve the slightest measure of agreement. The Mandate was therefore simply imposed upon "the general population" of the country in spite of the protests of their representatives.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is, however, to be noted that the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, speaking in the House of Lords on June 27, 1923, stated that, while the intention had been from the beginning to make a National Home for the Jews, "every provision has been made to prevent it from becoming in any sense of the word a Jewish state or a state under Jewish domination."



## CHAPTER IX

### ARABS AND JEWS

Arab-Jewish Relations before the First World War—The Mandatory Administration's Attitude towards the Land Problem, Education, and the Muslim Community

SUCH efforts as had been made to persuade the "general population" to accept the Mandate had completely failed. Prudence might nevertheless have suggested the desirability of voluntarily observing, as far as possible, the conditions which had been laid down by those Arab representatives who had expressed understanding of Zionist aspirations. These conditions, as we have already mentioned, were the following: a representative local administration, effective measures for protecting the interests of the Arab peasants and tenant farmers, and assistance in their economic development. Unfortunately from the moment that the Arab movement suffered a temporary setback the Zionist leaders repudiated this obligation. They appear to have thought that the support of British bayonets dispensed them henceforth from the need of securing the goodwill of the "general population," and that they would, as Sultan Abdul Hamid had once suggested, "receive Palestine gratis."<sup>1</sup> If the British had claimed the right of conquest the idea would have been at least logical, though very unwise. We have seen, however, that the British claimed to be liberators, not conquerors. The British Military Court of Inquiry into the disorders of 1920, for example, reported that

as late as June 1918 active recruiting was carried on in Palestine for the Sherifian Army, our allies, the recruits being given to understand that they were fighting in a national cause and to liberate their country from the Turks. These men, it is believed, actually took

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<sup>1</sup> Mr Ussishkin, for example, at the Zionist Congress of 1921, thus outlined the policy which he thought should be adopted towards the Arabs. "We cannot," he said, "treat with the Arabs by the sword or provocatively. . . . We must just keep quiet and betake ourselves to Palestine. We shall have many bad moments. But if we keep on going to Palestine, in tens, in hundreds, in thousands, in hundreds of thousands, the Arab question will solve itself."—*Der XIIte Zionisten Kongress*, p. 70.



part in the offensive against the Turks. . . . The real impression left upon the Arabs generally was that the British were going to set up an independent Arab state which would include Palestine.<sup>1</sup>

Apart, however, from the hopes of political freedom that had been aroused in Arab minds, there was a store of experience available to the Zionists and to the Administration concerning Arab-Jewish relations before the First World War which clearly indicated the essential elements of future policy. The following extract, for example, shows how satisfactory these relations could be when certain conditions were fulfilled. It is taken from an article of the Jewish publicist Mr H. M. Kalvariski, an administrator of the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association colonies who came to Palestine towards the end of the nineteenth century :

In the Jewish colonies the relations between Jew and Arab were very cordial. They met both in their houses and in their fields and got to know each other intimately. When the Jewish colonies were first started there was a great demand for labour . . . and there were no Jewish labourers in the country. It was therefore necessary to engage Arab labour, and thus Jewish farmers and Arab labourers had an opportunity of knowing each other. The fellahin from the neighbouring villages worked in the Jewish colonies, returning at night to their own homes. There they related that the "Yahudi" [the Jew] and the "Hawaja" [owner] were good men who paid well. At the same time close relations were gradually established between the Jewish colonists and the Arab land-owners. Jewish farmers bought horses for breeding and riding in partnership with Arab Sheikhs, each using the animal in turn, and often owned flocks of sheep and cattle in common.

There were, it is true, frequent boundary disputes between Jews and Arabs, but such incidents were, and still are [1930], of common occurrence between the Arabs themselves. There were also armed Beduin attacks from time to time, but such attacks were carried out by the same bands on their own kinsmen . . . they were not racial and were not directed exclusively against the Jews. In general, the Jews and Arabs in the old colonies were on excellent terms.<sup>2</sup>

The nature of the difficulties which were liable to occur in connexion with Jewish colonization, and to mar these good relationships, are indicated in an interesting account of the founding of the Jewish township Hadera. This settlement dates from 1891, and the author of the account, Mr Moshe Smilansky,

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Commission on the Palestine Disturbances of August 1929.* Command 3530, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *Jewish-Arab Affairs* (Jerusalem, 1931), p. 11.



a well-known Jewish orange-grove owner and writer, was one of the original settlers, being at the time a boy of sixteen.<sup>1</sup>

In the winter of 1890-91, writes Mr Smilansky, the Russian Government had recognized the "Hovevei Zion." In Palestine land was being bought up rapidly and shiploads of new immigrants were being disembarked at Jaffa week by week. One day it was reported that 30,000 dunams of land had been acquired in the north of the coastal plain. A group of enthusiasts, some middle-aged men with families, some still boys, volunteered to take up part of this land. An experienced settler asked them if they knew why the village was called Hadera.

Our host looked somewhat confused. "Unless I err, it means green." "H'm, a bad sign! Isn't there some connexion between the name and the blackwater fever which the Arabs claim prevails in that district?" "Possibly, but surely we're not going to let ourselves be frightened off by Arab tales of fever? We're not Arabs, and we'll find some way of putting an end to malaria." . . .

When the first settlers arrived at Hadera their driver smiled wryly on observing their delight at the green appearance of their land.

"These green valleys are swamps. . . . That's where the malaria comes from. . . . Look around you. In all this broad valley you see not a single village! There's a Circassian village on the edge of your land, but almost all its inhabitants are dead. The few who are left are cripples!"

"We needn't take our cue from barbarians!" replied the settlers.

The pioneers set to work, planted a vineyard, sowed wheat. With the summer came the fever, and soon the colonists were dying, sometimes a family at a time, as in the case of the Rev. Jacob Idelsohn, his wife, and his two sons. The enthusiasm of the settlers carried them on through five years. Nevertheless there came a moment when it seemed that the fever had beaten them and that the colony must be abandoned. At this moment, however, Baron de Rothschild intervened from Paris and promised to provide funds for draining the swamps. Accordingly in the summer of 1896 "hundreds of black labourers came from Egypt to dig the broad and deep trenches required for the drainage." These men, presumably Arabic-speaking Muslims, also "died in scores"; but in time the drainage was completed. Once that had been done the worst of the difficulties were over, and Hadera has now become a straggling township of 5000 inhabitants,

<sup>1</sup> *Hadera* (Jewish National Fund Library No. 2; Tel Aviv, 1935).



rather disfigured by blocks of urban flats put up during the years of great immigration, but prosperous, surrounded by trees and well-cultivated land. Besides the Circassians, Mr Smilansky tells us, there used to be Bedouins living in the neighbourhood, who sometimes stole the colonists' horses. When the draining began these Bedouins protested. "The Bedouin neighbours, the Damireh and the Infiat tribes, rose up in protest. . . . Where would they pasture their cattle and sheep? But the [Turkish] mudir came from Cæsarea with a detachment of police and dispersed them. From that time on the work proceeded without disturbance."

This brochure seems worth quoting at some length, because, being a Jewish account, its evidence concerning Jewish colonization is not open to accusations of unfairness. It is unfortunately evident that while the enthusiasm of the colonists was admirable, their arrogance was at least equally conspicuous. The draining of the marshes was due not to the superior skill of the Jewish colonists as compared with the existing "barbarians," but to the aid of their superior funds. Characteristic, too, is the reliance upon the Turkish police to settle the problem created for the Bedouin by the loss of their pasturage. There is no suggestion that the colonists felt any responsibility for the future livelihood of their neighbours. Probably some of the Bedouin found work with the colonists, for this was before the days of the Jewish National Fund and the Jewish Labour Federation, with their absolute rejection of Arab labour. Moreover, there was still space in the land, and the Bedouin could perhaps establish themselves elsewhere. But Palestine is a small and fairly thickly populated country: in the case of continued immigration the problem would obviously soon become acute, especially when the dispossessed persons were peasants, and not Bedouin. The Turkish Government itself was aware of the problem created by rapid immigration, and periodically issued orders to suspend it.

Early in the twentieth century—that is, soon after the holding of the first Zionist Congress—relations were on several occasions severely strained. A conflict, for example, arose over the Jewish settlements in Lower Galilee (Sejera, Yavniel, Mesha, Beit Gan, Melhamia).

"Most of the land," wrote Mr Kalvariski, in the article quoted above,

which had been purchased from absentee landlords and merchants in Beirut was occupied by the tenants. Mr Ossovetsky, who acted as agent, and the landlords paid no regard to the fate of these tenants,



and insisted on their eviction, as the land had already been bought and paid for. This led to a conflict between the tenants and Ossovetsky. The Vali (Governor) backed Ossovetsky, while the Kaimakam (District Officer) of Tiberias, Emir Amin Arslan, sided with the tenants. Ossovetsky was shot at; troops were brought and many tenants were arrested and taken to prison. . . . It was then that, for the first time, I came in contact with Arab nationalism. Rashid Bey, the Vali, who was a Turk, cared very little whether the Tiberias District was inhabited by Arabs or Jews, and was thus prepared to order the eviction of the tenants. But Emir Amin (Arslan), the Kaimakam of Tiberias, who was an Arab Druze, not only insisted on the payment of compensation to the evicted Arabs, but also, as I was later informed, resisted the de-Arabization of the district.<sup>1</sup> . . . Under the Sultan Abdul Hamid the population was so terrorized that no one dared proclaim his Arab nationalism. After the fall of Abdul Hamid and the proclamation of the Constitution matters took a new turn . . . and the Arabs began to fight in the Turkish Parliament for their nationalist aspirations. They looked upon Zionism as an enemy that was trying to invade districts which they considered purely Arab.<sup>2</sup>

In view of such experiences it would surely have been wise to take effective steps to regulate all land transactions in order that no peasant or agricultural worker should be displaced without his position being assured elsewhere. Where Jews acquired part of the land of a village precautions should have been taken to ensure that the villagers were enabled, by the capital secured and, if necessary, by Jewish financial and technical assistance, to live under better conditions upon the remainder.

Unfortunately nothing of the sort was done. Two examples from the beginning of the mandatory régime will make this clear. The first is the case of the area known as Marj ibn Amir, or the Emeq. This area comprised 200,000 dunams (50,000 acres) of land, which was cultivated by about 8000 Arabs, who inhabited twenty-two villages.<sup>3</sup> The land belonged to absentee, non-Palestinian landlords, and the Zionists had been considering its acquisition since 1903. Negotiations which were actually in progress in 1914 were interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War. Between 1921 and 1925 these lands were transferred to the Jews for the sum of LP.726,000. Twenty-one of

<sup>1</sup> This particular dispute was settled, on Mr Kalvariski's intervention, by the payment of compensation to the tenants.

<sup>2</sup> *Jewish-Arab Affairs*, pp. 11-14.

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the Commission on the Palestine Disturbances of August 1929*, p. 118.



the twenty-two villages had to be abandoned by their inhabitants, whose subsequent fate has never been definitely established. Those of them who were tenants (but not the agricultural labourers) are said to have received *ex gratia* compensation from the Jewish purchasers amounting in all to £28,000. By 1930 the Jewish population of the area was said to be about 7000.<sup>1</sup> The purchase money passed to the landlords, who were a Beirut Christian family named Sursock. The latter were cosmopolitan in outlook ; they possessed a whole quarter of big villas in Beirut, but spent much of their time in Europe. According to the Jewish expert Dr Ruppin, nine-tenths of all the land bought by Jews up to 1929 was acquired from absentee landlords.

There is no doubt that the transference of the land in the Emeq to the Zionists led to a capital expenditure which resulted in its being better drained, planted with trees, and more intensely cultivated than before. On the other hand, the often quoted passage in which the first High Commissioner describes this transformation appears to be seriously exaggerated. In his *Report on the Administration of Palestine from 1920 to 1925* Sir Herbert Samuel wrote :

The most striking result in this sphere [Jewish colonization] that has been achieved during the last few years has been in the valley of Esdraelon. . . . When I first saw it in 1920 it was a desolation. Four or five small and squalid Arab villages, long distances apart from one another, could be seen on the summits of low hills here and there. For the rest the country was uninhabited. . . . The whole aspect of the valley has been changed—in the spring the fields of vegetables or of cereals cover many miles of the land, and what five years ago was little better than a wilderness is being transformed before our eyes into a smiling countryside.

This account is contradicted for the period immediately preceding the First World War by a letter written by Colonel T. E. Lawrence to his mother in the year 1909, when he made his first visit to Syria. In it he wrote :

From Nazareth I went past the plain of Esdraelon to Harosheth. . . . The plain was very good ; so fertile, and all the people of the villages engaged in harvesting and threshing : they take tents out and live in the fields, while strings of camels and asses carry the corn to the threshing floors.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Palestine* (memorandum submitted to Sir John Hope Simpson, 1930), p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters of T. E. Lawrence* (London, 1938), p. 74. It is only fair to add that in regard to the Tiberias district Lawrence speaks in glowing terms of Jewish



It is in any case impossible to reconcile the statement that the country was "uninhabited" with the fact that the census of 1922 states that the village of Affule alone, situated in the centre of the plain and not upon a hill, had at that time 500 Muslim Arab inhabitants. The traces of a stone-built mosque still remain, amid the buildings of the present Jewish settlement. Moreover, there is still in Nazareth a number of large granaries which formerly served to store the grain which was produced out of the "desolation" of the Emeq. It will be noticed that Sir Herbert contrasts the appearance of the Jewish cultivation in the spring with what he apparently saw of its Arab cultivation in the late summer or autumn. For he did not arrive in Palestine until mid-summer 1920, and cereal land in Palestine between the time of harvest and the first rains does, indeed, have a "desolate" appearance. Moreover, in one of his own earlier reports he had written, "When General Allenby's army swept over Palestine . . . it occupied a country exhausted by war. The population had been depleted—much cultivated land was left untilled; the stocks of cattle and horses had fallen to a low ebb; the woodlands, always scanty, had almost disappeared." In point of fact, the Emeq itself contained traces of several former villages, the abandonment of which Jewish experts attributed to the spread of malaria.<sup>1</sup> With regard to the elimination of the latter disease from the Emeq, it is to be noted that it was also eliminated from the purely Arab area of Jenin in the

colonization. Laurence Oliphant, writing in 1883, stated that: "The whole plain of Esdraelon . . . is now all owned by one rich firm of Syrian bankers, who draw an annual income of \$200,000 a year from it. They own practically five thousand human beings as well, who form the population of thirty villages which are in their hands. . . . Readers will be surprised to learn that almost every acre of the plain of Esdraelon is at this moment in a high state of cultivation; that it is perfectly safe to ride across it in any direction. . . . It looks to-day like a huge green lake of waving wheat, with its village-crowned mounds rising from it like islands; and it presents one of the most striking pictures of luxurious fertility which it is possible to conceive. . . . Some idea of the amount of the grain which is annually grown in their portion of the plain of Esdraelon alone may be gathered from the fact that Mr Sursock himself told me a few weeks ago that the cost of transporting his last year's crop to Haifa and Acre amounted to \$50,000. This was said as illustrating the necessity of a railway across the plain, with a view of cheapening the cost of transport."—L. Oliphant, *Haifa; or, Life in Modern Palestine* (London, 1887), pp. 42, 59, 60.

<sup>1</sup> "The devastation caused by the malaria reached its climax during the recent military campaign, when moving masses of Turkish troops, almost all suffering from malaria, carried the disease from place to place . . . and infected a population already weakened by under-feeding."—*Report on the Administration of Palestine, 1920-1921*.



same period, though there had been no sales of land to Jews in that district.

The second case is that of the Beisan lands in the Jordan valley. This was an area of 400,000 dunams of State land which had been acquired by Sultan Abdul Hamid by means the justice of which was disputed by the Arabs in possession. This land was allotted by the Mandatory Administration on favourable terms to the Arab tenants who had enjoyed the use of the land in the time of the Ottoman Government. This arrangement undoubtedly gave satisfaction at the time to Arab feeling, but the fellahin concerned "lived in mud hovels, suffered severely from the prevalent malaria, and were of too low intelligence to be receptive of suggestions for improvement of their housing, water-supply, or education." The fellahin were therefore incapable of developing the land, much of which would have been suitable for irrigation if a general scheme of development could have been adopted. Some of them made a certain profit by reselling the land to Jews, a procedure which was against the intention of the law. The land in the possession of the Arab fellahin has, therefore, remained undeveloped, while the case has at the same time given the Zionists a valid grievance, for they point out truly that their resources and energy might have been applied under a carefully thought-out scheme to raise the standard of life of the existing fellahin and at the same time provide a considerable area for Jewish settlement.

The fundamental difficulty of promoting settlement of Jews on the land is, however, the extremely limited amount of land available. Already in 1930 Sir John Hope Simpson, after a survey of the possibilities of Palestine, wrote :

It has emerged quite definitely that there is at the present time and with the present methods of Arab cultivation no margin of land available for agricultural settlement by new immigrants, with the exception of such undeveloped land as the various Jewish agencies have in reserve.

Writing seven years later, the Royal Commission specified the position more closely. They recommended

limitation of the close settlement upon the land to the plains districts. As regards the hill districts, on a long view there is no land available for any experiments in close settlement and mixed farming by the Jews, except possibly in the vicinity of Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Royal Commission Report, pp. 366, 367.



"The evidence we received from Government officers," they say,

established the fact that up to 1930 or 1931 there was land available for displaced tenants, but that from 1932 onward it has been extremely difficult for such people to find land.

The Commission, therefore, found it necessary to recommend an alteration in the Mandate in order to enable the forbidding of the transfer of Arab land to Jews.<sup>1</sup> Effect was finally given to these recommendations in 1940.

So far as could be gathered from Jewish evidence before the Royal Commission, particularly that of Dr Ruppin and Dr Hexter, the Zionist claim is that the potentially irrigable land still in the possession of the Arabs should be provided with irrigation by Government or Jewish funds. This will, it is alleged, enable the Arab to live by intensive cultivation on one-fifth of the ground with the same standard of living with which he lives on the whole to-day. The remaining four-fifths will be sold to the Jews. It appears, indeed, that the Agency are opposed to any large-scale measures on the part of the Government to intensify or develop fellahin farming unless this involves the transference of some of the land in question to Jews. For the following passage occurred in the evidence given before the Royal Commission :

SIR LAURIE HAMMOND. What struck Sir Morris Carter was this. The Government give the Arab cultivator what you yourself recommended, a long-term loan. . . . With that long-term loan, inspired by the example of the Jews around him, he arranges to irrigate his land. Having done that, he will not be very willing to sell to anybody. He would want to keep it for himself. Is that not a very natural thing ?

DR MAURICE B. HEXTER. I trust I did not make a suggestion which later on is inferred to imply if Government adopted that suggestion it would mean our development stopped. That surely is not what was intended, because, as you phrase it, one of my suggestions might prevent me getting another piece of land. That is by no means what was intended. . . . I hope I have not left the impression we were in favour of such long-term loans for such development as to enable the Arab to intensify his cultivation and leave us out in the cold.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Royal Commission Report, p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> Royal Commission Minutes of Evidence, 2521.



This passage recalls the discussion which took place at a Zionist meeting at The Hague in March 1916, at which Dr H. G. Heymann mentioned the disadvantages of the various Powers who might become suzerain in Palestine. Turkey, if strong, would be unsympathetic ; if weak, dependent on the Arabs. Russia would be anti-Semitic, France too Catholic ; while " if Palestine is English the land will, indeed, flourish, but the English will, as in Egypt, follow a policy which bases itself in the first place on the Arab peasantry." <sup>1</sup> Under the Mandatory régime it was certainly reasonable if Jews were to provide the capital for developing the country that they should have their due reward. Yet surely the transference to them of four-fifths of the land is a proposition which the Palestinians could never be expected to accept ? Parity, of which there was sometimes talk in Zionist circles, might have suggested half and half as a fair division.

Before leaving the question of the land a few words on the Huleh concession will not be out of place. This is a project for draining a lake in Northern Palestine and the marshy land around it. A concession for this purpose was originally granted by the Ottoman Government to certain Syrian Arab merchants. The concessionaires found themselves unable to carry out the work on account of the expense, and in 1930 Sir John Hope Simpson wrote in his report :

The Huleh area is all irrigable . . . and it is regrettable that the area owned by the Government therein has passed almost in its entirety into the hands of a concessionaire. . . . If the concession falls in it seems essential that the Government should retain the proprietary right in the area for development purposes.<sup>2</sup>

In 1934 the Jewish Palestine Land Development Company purchased the concession for £192,000. This Company, like the Arab concessionaires, is unable to carry out the necessary works on account of the great expense. Now that the concern is Jewish, however, the Government is considering making a contribution of £226,000 towards the total of nearly £1,000,000 required. There is, of course, a number of Arabs already living in the area concerned.<sup>3</sup> Under the original (Arab) concession an area of 10,000 dunams was to be reserved for them. This has now been raised to 15,772 ; which would appear to correspond roughly

<sup>1</sup> Gelber, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 83, 84.

<sup>3</sup> Estimated by Jewish sources in 1930 at 2075. The statement also made in the same document that there is no material increase among them is questionable.



with the increase of the population in Palestine during the last quarter of a century. Under the new concession, however, the remainder of the reclaimed land will be settled by Jews instead of by Arabs, between a third and a half of the £226,000 which the Government is asked to contribute will be paid by Arab taxpayers, while the wages for the work, in so far as Government does not stipulate to the contrary, will presumably go exclusively to Jewish workmen. The new concession appears, therefore, very much less favourable to the Arabs than the former. At the same time, the undertaking involves a very heavy expenditure of capital, and if adequate consideration were given to Arab interests, after due consultation with Arab representatives, its carrying out would be a happy example of the advantages which could be brought to the country by Jewish capital and energy. At the moment, unfortunately, the Arab cultivators regard the project with the greatest possible suspicion.<sup>1</sup>

In concluding this section it is necessary to add that the peasants are deeply grateful to the Department of Agriculture for the work which it has done for them. They have also greatly profited by the Jewish market for their produce.<sup>2</sup> The question of land sales has, however, caused a profound sense of grievance, and was certainly a principal cause of the revolt of the peasantry which was maintained in Palestine for over three years. A few further examples of the working of land sales may be given here. They are taken from a pamphlet entitled *Who is prosperous in Palestine?*<sup>3</sup>

#### *Tulkarm Sub-district*

(i) Zeita village : nearly 4000 acres sold ; money received by peasants gone through quickly or in part settlement of their debts. No development carried out.

(ii) Attil village : about 1000 acres sold ; results of the sales similar to those of Zeita.

(iii) Tulkarm town : nearly 4000 acres sold. No development carried out. One family, which before the sale of part of their lands was indebted to the extent of £30,000, is now indebted to the

<sup>1</sup> "Lake Huleh. Members of the *Hulata* group, comprising twelve men, began fishing in Lake Huleh, the local Arab fishermen having quitted their work under the pressure of Arab terrorism. Fishing in Lake Huleh has now become a Jewish pursuit. This group too was equipped with rowing-boats and nets by the Section."—*Zionist Organization Report* (1939).

<sup>2</sup> It is to be noted, however, that as Jewish agriculture develops it tends to deprive the Arab cultivators of the new market. Thus the *Jewish Agency Report to the Zionist Congress* (1937 ; p. 548) discusses plans framed in order that "Jewish farmers can capture the entire market."

<sup>3</sup> By British Resident. Labour Monthly Pamphlets, No. 7 (London, 1936).



extent of more than £35,000. The developed lands possessed by this family were developed before the sale.

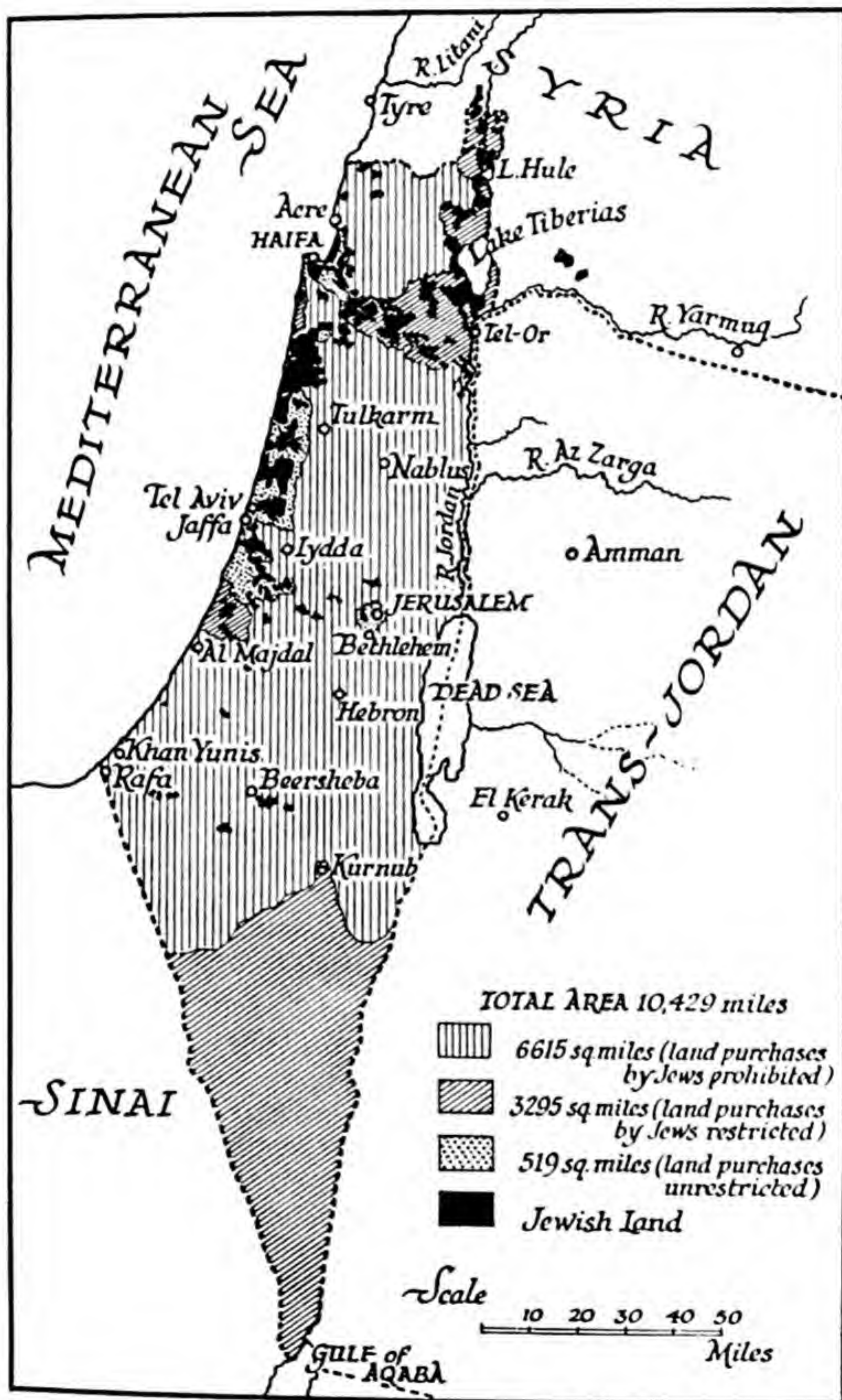
(iv) Baqa el Gharbiyeh village : about 500 acres sold. Money received spent upon part settlement of village's debts. No development carried out.

It seems regrettable that the Royal Commission, in the course of its inquiry, did not make a thorough investigation into the economic conditions of a few selected Arab villages which had sold land to the Jews. Instead they contented themselves with remarking that "in the hill districts it is to be feared that the fellahin, under their crushing load of debt, will still offer lands for sale."<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile educated young Arabs studying the Jewish Press which circulated in Palestine could note the tone of such appeals as those of the "Galilee Redemption Committee." A whole-page advertisement was, for example, inserted by this body in *The Jewish Chronicle* of March 18, 1938, under the heading "On to Galilee ! Safeguard the frontiers of Palestine." This appealed to the reader to "seize an opportunity which might never come back again," and to contribute funds, in particular by attending a dinner at the Dorchester Hotel (tickets, one guinea), in order to buy "large stretches of fertile land in Galilee." "The extent of the Jewish state," it said, "depends on the sacrifices you are prepared to make."

The second example of the Mandatory administration which we will consider is its policy with regard to education. It has already been mentioned that one of the *faits accomplis* which the Zionist Commission brought about in Palestine was the reconstitution of the twelve Zionist schools which had been established shortly before the First World War and their rapid increase to forty. When the Civil Administration in 1920 came to consider its education policy the existence of these forty schools was used as argument for maintaining a Hebrew sub-national school system distinct from that of the Mandatory Government. The *Annual Report of the Department of Education* for 1935 thus refers to this episode : "Since 1920 a dual system of national education has gradually developed, formed on a linguistic and racial basis, Arab and Hebrew." The suggestion will be noticed in this sentence that the growth of this "dual system of national education" was a sort of natural phenomenon, entirely out of the control of the Government. The fact was, of course, that the Zionists were determined to have a national Hebrew system under Jewish control.

<sup>1</sup> Royal Commission Report, p. 263





THE LAND TRANSFER REGULATIONS OF 1940

The question had first arisen before the issue of the Mandate, in the time of the Military Administration, and the attitude of the Chief Administrator on the subject was the cause of "representations" by Zionist circles in London.

"Major-General Money," says the *Political Report of the Zionist Executive to the Twelfth Zionist Congress* (1921),<sup>1</sup>

in a public speech at the inauguration of the Rothschild Hospital [Jerusalem], condemned the policy of creating "separate institutions for different communities," whether charitable or educational. Shortly afterwards a circular letter was sent from Headquarters to all Military Governors asking their opinion as to the advisability of creating mixed Government schools, for Arabs and Jews together. The Zionist Commission, it goes without saying, energetically resisted all these attempts, and it is possible that its endeavours, as well as representations made by the London Office to the Home Government, had something to do with Major-General Money's recall from the post of Chief Administrator.

Under Article XV of the Mandate the right of each community to maintain its own schools for the education of its own members in its own language is guaranteed, and the Jews, as long as they provided the funds, were therefore perfectly entitled to do so, however disastrous the result might be for Arab-Jewish relations in the future. But if they did so they obviously forfeited the right to any Government education subsidy other than that given to any private school which reached a standard approved by the Government. Already in 1921, however, the demand for a special subsidy was put forward by Jewish representatives in the recently formed Advisory Council. The Arab members, supported by one Jewish member who preserved the older P.I.C.A. tradition of friendly relations with the Arabs, opposed the proposal, which was, for the time being, dropped. In 1926, as appears from the annual Report of the Government, the Administration announced its intention of creating a unified educational system. In view of Zionist claims, however, this simply meant that in the future a special subsidy was granted to the Hebrew sub-national system, while a few Jewish inspectors were added to the Department of Education. In the words of the *Annual Report of the Department of Education* for 1935 :

In 1926 the Government, since its schools were conducted in Arabic and could not therefore be considered as affording educational facilities to the Jewish population, formulated the principle



that a larger sum than that payable on a flat *per capita* rate should annually be assigned to the schools of the Palestine Zionist Executive. The sum payable was calculated on the proportion of Jews to Arabs in the census population. . . . As from April 1933 the contribution was calculated on the proportion of the school-age population, and educational expenditure incurred by other Government Departments was also taken into account. As a result the grant was increased in 1933-34 to LP. 25,254. In respect of the financial year 1935-36 the grant was fixed at LP. 36,000.

The Zionist Executive thus succeeded in its objective of establishing an independent sub-national Hebrew educational system, while at the same time inducing the Government to contribute the same sum to it, out of the proceeds of Arab as well as Jewish taxation, as it would have done had it been under Government management and control. In the passage quoted from the *Report of the Education Department* it will be noticed that on this occasion the fact that the Government schools were "conducted in Arabic" is mentioned as if it were a natural phenomenon independent of human agency. In reality, of course, it was due to the Zionist boycott of the Government schools. If Jews had consented to utilize them they would soon have been conducted in Arabic in Arabic areas, in Hebrew in Hebrew areas, while a compromise would have been arrived at in mixed areas.

It is, therefore, difficult not to feel that Sir Herbert Samuel, the first High Commissioner, was doing the Arab population an injustice when he wrote (1925) the following passage of his Report on the five years of his administration :

"Some of the Arab political leaders," he said,

are accustomed to assert that the Government of Palestine devotes its chief efforts to promoting the establishment of the Jewish National Home. . . . From the Jewish side, on the other hand, the complaint is often made that the Government is inactive in all these matters. . . . So far as there is any truth in these criticisms, it is the latter that has most substance. . . . The school system, as it stands, although a reform is already under preparation, leaves almost the whole burden of the education of the Jewish child population upon the shoulders of the Jews themselves, in addition to the contribution which they make through their taxes to the Government system of Arab schools.

It is interesting to notice that the separatist system introduced by the Jewish Agency has resulted in the National Council of Palestinian Jews being faced by similar demands for grants from



various Jewish sectional minorities. The first was that of Orthodox Jews, who complained that instruction in the Hebrew schools did not give sufficient emphasis to the Mosaic Law. Their demand for a proportional subsidy having been granted, the Jewish Labour Federation then demanded a corresponding subsidy for their private-school system, on the ground that the Hebrew schools did not pay sufficient respect to the left-wing doctrines which they favoured. This demand for "separate political socialist education for workers' children within the general system, and at its expense<sup>1</sup> and with its responsibility" was approved by the National Council of Palestinian Jews. These and similar problems led the Mandatory Administration in 1945 to appoint a Commission of Inquiry into the whole Jewish school system.

With regard to Arab education, both the Military and the Civil Administration initiated a generous programme of development. This, however, was rapidly curtailed on account of "lack of funds"; and throughout the Mandatory régime expenditure on education has formed a far lower percentage of the total expenditure than it has in Iraq or Egypt. The following table<sup>2</sup> shows the development of the Arab educational system to the time of the rising of 1936:

SCHOOL YEAR	NO. OF SCHOOLS	SCHOOL YEAR	NO. OF SCHOOLS
1919-20	171	1927-28	314
1920-21	244	1928-29	310
1921-22	311	1929-30	310
1922-23	314	1930-31	308
1923-24	314	1931-32	305
1924-25	315	1932-33	299
1925-26	314	1933-34	320
1926-27	315	1934-35	350

In the *Memoranda prepared for the Royal Commission* (1936), (p. 121) the Administration wrote:

The expansion of Arab educational services has up to now barely kept pace with the expansion of the school-age population, and it will have to be increased considerably if any radical improvement in the extent of education is to be effected.

The inadequacy of the Arab educational system is the one Arab grievance for whose removal the Royal Commission did not

<sup>1</sup> And to some extent at the expense of the Arab taxpayer.

<sup>2</sup> *Statistical Abstract of Palestine* (1936), Table No. 98.



hesitate to make recommendations. They suggested that expenditure on Arab education should be given precedence of all other claims except those of security.<sup>1</sup> In passing we may notice that the health services were similarly starved ; for the Report of the Administration to the Royal Commission stated that the policy of the Health Department had been designed to achieve as much as possible

at a comparatively small expenditure when compared with that of other countries. . . . Owing, however, to financial stringency in the past, the medical policy has not yet been fully carried out, and the provision for infant welfare and maternity centres is admittedly small in a country with a high mortality rate.<sup>2</sup>

Our third example of the policy of the Mandatory Administration is the action taken with regard to the Muslim Supreme Council. This body was set up to regulate the religious affairs of the Muslim community, and in particular to supervise the spending of the Waqf funds, religious appointments, and so forth. Since in Muslim countries these services are, as matter of course, entrusted to a special department of State, known as the Ministry or Department of Waqfs, the setting up of the Muslim Supreme Council in Palestine was an official confirmation of the point of view of the Mandate that the Muslim majority in Palestine were not identified with the Government, but were simply one of several religious communities. Now the heads of the older religious communities under this system were always to some extent the political representative of their community in its dealings with the Government. The political importance of the Maronite Patriarch in the Lebanon, for example, was fully recognised. When the office of President of the Muslim Supreme Council became vacant during the days of the first High Commissioner it was given to Haj Amin el Husseini. Haj Amin was a member of the well-known Husseini family, who had been designated by his family as a future Mufti of Jerusalem and sent to study in Egypt for that purpose. His talents, however, were as definitely political as religious. He was an ardent nationalist ; during the First World War he had worked for the English, and is said during 1918 to have raised 2000 recruits in Palestine for the Sherifian forces on the strength of Allied promises to the

<sup>1</sup> Actually for 1937-38 the estimate for education was £309,000 ; for police and prisons £818,000 ; Trans-Jordan Frontier Force £187,000 ; contribution to Imperial Government towards British Forces in Palestine £351,000.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoranda prepared by the Government of Palestine for the Use of the Royal Commission* (Jerusalem, 1937), p. 132.



Arabs.<sup>1</sup> He later served as Intelligence Officer under the Arab régime in Damascus. After the disorders of 1920 he was condemned in his absence to ten years' imprisonment for having made a speech denouncing the Zionist policy of the Government. By pardoning him and securing his appointment as President of the Muslim Supreme Council Sir Herbert Samuel, then High Commissioner, no doubt hoped to harness him to the Mandatory chariot, and, in fact, Haj Amin was for years denounced by extremist Arab politicians as a British agent.<sup>2</sup> As time passed, however, his talents, his natural disposition, and the patronage of which he disposed combined to make him one of the most influential political figures in Palestine. The Muslim Supreme Council thus came to be identified with a particular political policy, though the statement of the Royal Commission that it formed a kind of third Government parallel to the Mandatory Government and the Jewish Agency appears very much exaggerated.

In point of fact, Haj Amin, in the later years of the Mandatory régime, occupied a commanding position not only on account of the patronage which he disposed, but on account of the energy and personal disinterestedness with which he had worked for the cause of the Palestine Arabs. Within Palestine he exerted all his influence to promote good relations between Christians and Muslims, and he numbered several Christians among his leading supporters. Externally he took every opportunity to arouse the sympathy of the larger Arab and Muslim worlds in the affairs of Palestine, and to promote peace and friendly relations between all the Muslim nations and sects, Sunni or Shiah.

On account of these activities he became in Jewish eyes the symbol of Arab opposition to Zionism, and a sustained campaign was carried on against him by the Zionists and their supporters in the English Press and Parliament. Within Palestine his position was regarded with disfavour by those Arabs whose policy differed from his, and who therefore disapproved of the influence which he enjoyed as holder of the highest religious office in the Muslim world of Palestine. In reality, while he was certainly the most conspicuous figure on the Arab side, there is no reason to suppose that the opposition to Zionism would have been any less if the Mufti had not held the position which he did hold. On many occasions, indeed, he acted as a moderating influence, and faith-

<sup>1</sup> Antonius, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

<sup>2</sup> The change in his attitude was accentuated, if not originated, by the disillusion caused by the letter of Mr Ramsay MacDonald, then Prime Minister, which interpreted, in a sense unfavourable to the Arabs, the Passfield White Paper of 1930.



fully carried out the difficult task of intermediary between the British Government and Muslim opinion. This has to be borne in mind in passing judgment on the activities in which he was the principal figure after Arab feeling had exploded in the rising of 1936-39 and he himself had fled the country.

With regard to the Mufti's influence in general, until his deposition in 1937, we cannot do better than quote a passage of the Haycraft Report of 1921, which was written with reference to other leaders and other times, but is at least equally applicable to later times and leaders.

The Haycraft Commission wrote :

It has been said to us by Jewish witnesses that there was no essentially anti-Jewish question. . . . It is argued by them that all the trouble is due to the propaganda of a small class whose members regret the departure of the old régime . . . that in co-operation with them are certain foreigners, principally French agents.<sup>1</sup> . . . A good deal has been alleged by Jewish witnesses about the instigation of the Arab mob to violence by their leaders. If this means no more than that while educated people talk and write, the mob acts, then there is truth in the allegation. But if it means that had it not been for incitement by the notables, effendis and sheikhs, there would have been no riots, the allegation cannot be substantiated. . . . All that can truly be said in favour of the Jewish view is that the leaders of Arab opinion not only make no secret of what they think, but carry on a political campaign. In this campaign, however, the people participate with the leaders, because they feel that their political and material interests are identical.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In later years German and Italian agents were to be attributed the decisive rôle earlier given to the French.

<sup>2</sup> *The Palestine Disturbances in May 1921*. Command 1540, p. 45.

## CHAPTER X

### PALESTINE UNDER THE MANDATE

*The Arabs.* The fifteen years from 1920 to 1935 were marked by a great rise in the Arab population, which increased from about 600,000 in 1920 to about 900,000 in 1935. This increase is relatively the same as that which occurred in Egypt during the fifteen years which followed the English occupation of that country, or in Algeria after the French occupation. On the other hand, the growth of population in Syria under the French Mandate, though very marked, notably in the cities of Beirut, Damascus, Tripoli, and Aleppo, is apparently less proportionately than that of Palestine. It is therefore probable that the rapid increase of Arab population in the latter country is in part due to the Jewish factor. On the other hand, many other factors also have co-operated to produce this result. During the First World War "the population had been depleted."<sup>1</sup> After peace was established its growth was stimulated in several ways. The fellahin were no longer liable to the Turkish conscription, which had formerly removed many of the young men for ever. Before the War there had been a large emigration from many parts of Syria to South and North America; after the War the changed conditions in the countries of immigration greatly reduced this movement. In Palestine roads were built and other useful reforms introduced. The health services tended to reduce mortality: this for Muslims averaged 186 per thousand live births during the three years 1922-24, and dropped to 167 per thousand for the three years 1934-36. A great deal was done to eliminate malaria and other diseases.

Before the War the surplus population from the hills used to descend to the coastal plain, where their vitality and numbers were reduced by the various diseases which were prevalent there. As the plain became healthier, owing to Governmental and Zionist activities, these apparently empty places filled up with startling rapidity. The increase in the area of Arab orange-groves enabled a denser population to be settled in the district between Jaffa, Ramleh, and Lydda. It is true that the proportion

<sup>1</sup> No figures are available for the Arab population, but the Jewish population is said to have been reduced from 90,000 to 55,000.



of Arab groves to Jewish groves decreased, and that Zionist labour policy to a great extent excluded Arab workers from Jewish groves. Nevertheless the increase in the Arab area from 20,000 to 140,000 dunams was so great that it afforded occupation for many additional Arab workers. As in Syria, the increase of the population is most marked in the large cities, but there is no doubt that it is very considerable in the villages also.

The increase was apparently foretold by the Health Department as early as 1920. In a letter published in *The Times* on December 15, 1938, Dr W. N. Leak, Principal Medical Officer for Nablus and Jaffa from 1918 to 1920, described as follows the conclusions to which he and his colleagues were led by the experience which they gained while conducting anti-malarial work in the villages :

It was found that, while in the towns the birth-rate among the Arabs was only some two times the death-rate, in many villages it was more like four times. It was obvious . . . that the fertility rate was almost incredibly high. Following this discovery, a memorandum was prepared for the incoming civil administration—and, I believe, presented—showing that the natural rate of growth of the population was, owing to the health measures taken, so great that the capacity of the country to absorb immigrants was actually much less than would appear from a casual glance at the statistics.

The expansion has been least apparent in the smaller towns remote from the citrus area. These appear to have suffered from the hypertrophy of the large cities. Nablus has suffered from the fall in the export of olive-oil soap ; while Nazareth has lost in importance since the extensive crops of the Emeq have been transferred from the Arab to the Jewish economic system. Since the area of land available to the villagers has greatly decreased, owing to land sales to Jews, while the population has increased, there has naturally been a drift of labour to the two ports, Jaffa and Haifa, where the mass immigration of 1933-36 stimulated a great activity in the building and allied trades. Little or nothing was done by the Administration for the welfare of these workers, who included a considerable number of Hauranis, Transjordanians, and Bedouin, as well as villagers. In Haifa alone there were, in 1935, over 11,000 Arab workers living in hovels made out of old petrol-tins, without any water-supply or the most rudimentary sanitary arrangements. The Hauranis and Transjordanians were better off than the Palestinians, for they came from a country where the cost of living is low, and, not



having their families with them, were able to sleep in the open. The sum which they saved from their wages thus gave them a considerable benefice when translated into the terms of the low cost of living in their homeland. The Palestinian worker, on the other hand, was faced with the high cost of living and the very high rents which resulted from the economic transformation of Palestine brought about by the immigration.<sup>1</sup> His feelings were intensified by the spectacle of the handsome new boulevards erected in the more desirable parts of the towns by and for the immigrant population, and by the acres of Jewish working men's quarters erected by Jewish building societies. Sometimes, too, he had the experience of being driven from work by Jewish pickets, and he resented the fact that the Government paid the Jewish workman double the rate which it paid him for the same work.

For the villagers who remained on the land there were advantages. Taxation was reduced after 1931; the immigrants provided a market for the peasants' vegetables. The new roads and the education and health services, inadequate as they were, were very much better than nothing. The services of the Agricultural Department were also greatly appreciated.

In the middle and upper classes of Arab society the transformation was profound. Many families acquired considerable wealth from land sales; many used the capital so acquired to plant orange- or banana-groves. In the course of fifteen years there grew up a generation of young men and, to a less extent, young women who had received at least the elements of modern education. Hundreds of them had travelled abroad, and dozens had spent a number of years in European schools and universities. This younger generation had been brought up on the ideals of post-War nationalism, and they could not be kept quiet by flattery or jobs, as the older generation had been. There thus came about a complete transformation in the nature and intensity of the Arab opposition to the Judaization of the country. By 1933 the Arab population was altogether healthier, stronger, and better educated than it had been in 1920. The common danger, moreover, was bringing the various sections of the population closer together. Christians and Muslims, effendis and fellahin, were acquiring a new sense of solidarity. The formation of Palestine into a political entity, symbolized by the passport and

<sup>1</sup> "The rent of a decent room in Jaffa is about two-thirds of the wages of an unskilled worker."—G. Mansur, *The Arab Worker under the Palestine Mandate* (Jerusalem, 1938), p. 42.



customs barriers by which it was now separated from the rest of Syria, served to accentuate a sense of Palestinian Arab unity at the same time that it heightened the sense of Arab nationality by way of protest. Moreover, the Arab world around was bestirring itself. Iraq was busy consolidating its position as an independent Arab state. Egypt was full of activity: the final settlement of its difficulties with England might be expected at any moment. In Europe rude blows were being dealt both at the Jewish position and at the entire Versailles system. These could not fail to have their repercussions in the Levant, where the masterpiece of the post-War settlement had been the dismemberment of the Arab world and the deliberate creation of a new minority problem in Palestine.

At the very moment that the Arab population felt itself stronger and more determined the Mandate began to be more strictly applied. An attempt to give effect to the Shaw and Hope Simpson Reports had, indeed, been made by the issue of the Passfield White Paper in 1930. This actually stated that "in estimating the absorptive capacity of Palestine at any time account should be taken of Arab as well as of Jewish unemployment in determining the rate at which Jewish immigration should be permitted." The only result of this, however, was to decide Dr Weizmann that the time had come to give a turn to the Mandatory screw.<sup>1</sup> The Zionist supporters in the House of Commons were brought into action, and the Prime Minister was induced to send his "Black Letter." This not only explained away the White Paper, but interpreted the Mandate in a more totalitarian spirit than hitherto. This resounding political victory of Zionism was one of the causes which made it difficult for the Administration to take effective steps to prevent the forcible picketing campaign of the Federation of Jewish Labour in 1933-34, which resulted in the displacement of hundreds of Arab workers. The extent of this movement may be judged from the following paragraph from the *Davar* newspaper, dealing with one small settlement to the south of Jaffa:

A branch of the labour office has been opened in Beit Vegan. The office has begun an important social activity in which it has been helped also by the contracting office of the Workers' Council of Tel-Aviv, during the last five months. The position has changed

<sup>1</sup> "Suppose one were to force the pace it would start by shedding blood. One has to be careful not to press the screw too tight."—Dr Weizmann, November 21, 1919; quoted in *Hearings before the Committee of Foreign Affairs* (Washington, House of Representatives, 52).



as follows. In place of 200 Arab workers and 50 Jews, the last count gives 200 Hebrew workers and 70 Arab workers in Beit Vegan. The work continues.<sup>1</sup>

The Parliamentary incitement also made it difficult for the Administration to deal with the extensive illegal immigration. For Mr Lloyd George, speaking in the House of Commons, had virtually denied the right of the Administration to take steps against such immigration. "This [the Passfield] White Paper," he had said,

is a one-sided document. It is biased. Its whole drift is hostile to the Mandate. It breathes distrust and even antagonism of the Jewish activities. . . . You have only got to look at one or two things with which they are dealing. Take immigration. There is criticism of the Jews because some of them went there temporarily and remained, attracted by the country.<sup>2</sup>

The writer of these pages well remembers his arrival in Palestine in the autumn of 1933. I travelled from Istanbul to Haifa in a Bulgarian ship which also carried several hundred steerage passengers. These were Rumanian and Bulgarian Jews, who, on my asking where they were going and what they were doing, told me, to my astonishment, that they were "tourists" going to visit Palestine. "Of course, if the country attracts us," they said, using, no doubt unconsciously, the very words of Mr Lloyd George, "we may remain." On arrival at Haifa the "tourists" marched ashore in their hundreds without encountering any difficulties from the immigration authorities. Hundreds more who had not even a tourist visa landed secretly by night on lonely portions of the coast.

The Arab population, for whom the observance of the principle of the economic absorptive capacity of the country was the sole surviving safeguard, regarded this form of immigration in quite a different light from Mr Lloyd George; and from the moment that the law in Palestine was seen to be so elastic there was little respect left for it. Despairing of the Administration, the Arabs began themselves to form voluntary detachments to patrol the coast, arrest illegal immigrants, and hand them over to the authorities. Meanwhile the Arab Press conducted a campaign in which it was stated that the Government

were flooding the country with Jews with the object of displacing Arabs from the land and depriving them of their employment, [and

<sup>1</sup> *Davar*, No. 2830 (1934).

<sup>2</sup> November 17, 1930.



that] a mass immigration of Jews was being allowed and encouraged by Government so that when the Legislative Council was introduced the Jews would be in a majority.<sup>1</sup>

The strength of Arab public opinion became such that the Arab Executive declared a general strike for October 13, 1933. In spite of the Government's prohibition, a demonstration was held in Jerusalem; during the course of this the eighty-year-old Arab leader, Musa Kazim Pasha, was injured as the police were dispersing the crowd. Further demonstrations were held throughout Palestine during the following days. On October 27 the police fired upon a crowd of demonstrators in Jaffa, causing a score of deaths. For the moment the agitation subsided, leaving in the minds of the Zionists and their British supporters the unfortunate impression that henceforth "a whiff of grapeshot" would be sufficient at any time to overcome Arab resistance to a further "turn of the screw." A few weeks later the inevitable Commission of Inquiry, which was appointed to investigate the disorders, reported, as so many other commissions in Palestine have reported, both before and since, that the ground had been prepared for the disorder "by a general feeling of apprehension amongst the Arabs engendered by the purchase of land by the Jews, and by Jewish immigration."

*The Jews.* On the Jewish side the fundamental feature of the period 1920-35 was the enormous influx of Jewish money and the development of a community based on a modern European economy, superimposed on the more primitive Arab life. In this respect the circumstances resemble those in any ancient settled area, such as Algeria, which has been subjected to intensive European colonization. The capital sums invested in Palestine by Jews in this period amounted to over £80,000,000; the total sum spent must, of course, have been much greater. Since the sum of £80,000,000 was more than forty times the annual budget of Palestine in the early years of the Mandate, we may consider its investment in Palestine as the equivalent of the investment in England, whose annual budget was about £1,000,000,000, of about £40,000,000,000. It was therefore to be expected that there would be considerable results to show for this, particularly in an undeveloped and backward land like Palestine. In point of fact, the principal achievement has been the creation of the

<sup>1</sup> The Royal Commission characterized these charges as "crude." In view of Mr Lloyd George's statement to the Commission it appears that they very fairly represented the result of the attitude of H.M.G.



all-Jewish city of Tel Aviv, which has attained a population of nearly a quarter of a million. Tel Aviv, which means "the Hill of Spring," bears the same name as an Assyrian town on the river Habur, in the district known to-day as el Gezireh, to which the Prophet Ezekiel was once carried by the spirit.<sup>1</sup> Modern Tel Aviv adjoins Jaffa, of which it was once a suburb. In it are concentrated about half of all the Jews who have immigrated to Palestine since the First World War. Its prosperity from 1933 to 1935 was the result of the influx of capital which accompanied and made possible the immigration. There was a very considerable speculation in land and building. The city developed meanwhile a number of industries which supply some of the needs of the Jewish community: the export trade is not large. Tel Aviv is situated in the centre of the Jewish orange area; this, like that of the Arabs, has grown in recent years till the plantations cover an area of 140,000 dunams. In the orange industry, however, as elsewhere, the tremendous influx of capital has not been an unmixed blessing, for it has led to over-expansion. The following passage, for example, occurs in the recently published *Economic Survey of Palestine*:<sup>2</sup>

Palestine is peculiarly liable to this type of over-expansion. Large sums of refugee capital are constantly entering the country in search of investment, and every profitable opening is eagerly seized upon. The citrus industry is Palestine's classic example of over-investment at uneconomic prices, through the very pressure of investment-seeking capital, but Palestine offers many other, less spectacular, examples of this process. Unless investment can be nationally directed and controlled, Palestine will remain particularly prone to this evil, so long as it remains a haven for immigrant capital.

In passing we might remark that nearly all of Palestine's troubles might equally well be said to come from lack of "national direction and control" on the part of the Government, notably in such spheres as immigration and land sales, as well as that of capital investment in industry.<sup>3</sup>

To return to Tel Aviv. The city is a source of immense pride to Jews as the product of exclusively Jewish enterprise;

<sup>1</sup> "I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river Chebar, and to where they dwelt; and I sat there astonished among them seven days."—Ezekiel iii, 15.

<sup>2</sup> P. 69. By D. Horovitz and R. Hinden (Tel Aviv, 1938).

<sup>3</sup> By "national" control, however, the authors probably intended not the "national" Mandatory Government, but the "sub-national" Zionist Government.



it is characterized by the bustle typical of Jewish quarters all the world over. Europeans, who nevertheless appreciate the amenities and shops of Tel Aviv, generally prefer to have their residence in the Arab city of Jaffa, where life is more leisurely and rents are lower. Orientals in general are more impressed with Tel Aviv than are Europeans. They admire the evidences of constructive ability and the modernity which their own cities lack. On the other hand, they are apt to regard the city, without justification from the European point of view, as a sink of moral licence and social iniquity. This impression seems to be derived from the neglect by the majority of the immigrants of the social conventions and the decorum to which Easterners give such great importance.

A large majority of the inhabitants are of Polish-Jewish origin, and belonged before the First World War to the Jewish agglomeration in Russia. As such they were naturally influenced by, if, indeed, they did not themselves originate, the Socialist and Communist ideas which led to the Russian revolution. It was inevitable, therefore, that they should bring these ideas with them to Palestine. Since Tel Aviv is the greatest Jewish working-class centre in Palestine, it naturally became the headquarters of the General Federation of Jewish Labour, the principal Jewish labour organization. This organization maintains very comprehensive and efficient social services, and in its capacity as a political party (Mapai, the Party of the Workers of the Land of Israel) also exercises an often decisive influence over Zionist policy. It publishes the most widely circulated Hebrew newspaper in Palestine (*Davar*). In its internal policy it is strongly Socialist, while it is 'totalitarian' in its intolerance of opposition. Mapai, however, is Zionist before it is Socialist.

The party supports a Zionist programme for the widest possible immigration of the Jewish masses to Palestine. One of the aims of the party is the so-called *conquest of labour*—namely, the penetration of Jewish labour into all spheres of work, industry, trade, the public services, and most of all into agricultural work.<sup>1</sup>

It refuses to admit that any quantity of Jewish capital, however small, should go to provide work for Arab labourers if this can possibly be avoided. It carries this principle so far as to maintain that it is unjust that Jewish taxation paid to the Government should go towards the payment of wages for Arab labourers

<sup>1</sup> *Memoranda prepared by the Government of Palestine for the Use of the Royal Commission.*



employed on public works, even if this is far more economical for the Government than the employment of Jewish labour. This claim was officially accepted by the British Government in Mr Ramsay MacDonald's "Black Letter" of 1931.

On account of its Zionist principles Mapai has hitherto been unable to make much progress in developing its external Socialist policy, which aims at uniting Jewish and Arab workers against the Arab and English "exploiters." This policy was explained in an issue<sup>1</sup> of a paper called *Haqiqat el Amr* (*The Truth of the Matter*), which is published by the Mapai in Arabic for propaganda purposes. The article called upon Arab workers to unite with the Jews, whom it described as "that people of common Semitic origin" against

the colonizing Western nations, against a Power that comes with fleet and guns and bomb-throwing aeroplanes, a Power that runs after big profits based on the exploitation of the sweat of the forehead and the muscles of the natives [the word NATIVES is printed in English in capital letters to make it quite clear against whom the accusation is directed] in order in the end to send the money away out of the poverty-stricken East into the millionaire West.

Since Mapai itself has hitherto been dependent for its existence on the "fleet and guns and bomb-throwing aeroplanes" of the millionaire West, operating through the Mandatory Power, and upon the capital of Jewish millionaires of the West who support the National Home, it has not so far been able to make much progress towards the fulfilment of this programme.

The organization includes a contracting agency—Solel Boneh. Since this is not primarily a money-making concern, and has the backing of the Zionist authorities, it enjoys certain advantages in competing with regular contractors. The Palestine Administration, when giving contracts to Solel Boneh, sometimes stipulates that a certain proportion of the wage-bill shall be paid to Arab labour. There is, however, no Government supervision over the fulfilment of this provision, and this gives rise to bitter complaints on the part of the Arab workers, who allege that they are unjustly deprived of their due share of the wages paid.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> July 14, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> The following typical protest is taken from *Ad Difa* newspaper for September 11, 1937:

"The Union of Craftsmen and Artisans in Haifa to-day submitted a petition to the District Commissioner regarding the Government Hospital Contract and the differential treatment of Arab and Jewish workers. The Union further requested that they might be given a copy of the contract made with the con-



The policy of the Jewish Labour Federation with regard to immigration was thus described by Sir John Campbell, an investigator who had been invited to Palestine by the Zionist Organization.

The Federation appeared to think, he said, that

the thing which really mattered was to get as many Jews as possible into Palestine. . . . The theory appears to be that, given this influx, matters will right themselves, and the intelligence and energy of the Jew will enable him to live. . . . Thousands may perish, but thousands will remain to consolidate what has been gained.

To apply this policy in a time of crisis was described by Sir John as "disastrous" and "criminal folly."<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the influence of labour in Tel Aviv and the National Home in general, it would be a complete error to suppose that it is the only element of importance. Equally striking is the very large *bourgeois* element and the extremely high proportion of intellectuals. There is a developed artistic and intellectual life in Tel Aviv, as elsewhere in Jewish Palestine. There are, for example, two excellent Hebrew theatrical companies. On the Municipal Council the labour and the non-labour element balance, though the influence of the Right parties is somewhat lessened by the fact that they are divided into a number of different groups.

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tractors, Solel Boneh, who do not give the same treatment to the Arab workers as they do to Jewish, especially as regards wages and number of workers.

"The Union's protest included the following demands :

1. Equality in wages with the Jewish workers.
2. Equality in number with the Jewish workers.
3. That an impartial supervisor be appointed by the Government in order to see that the contracting company carries out the terms of the contract honestly towards the Arabs.
4. That the company submit a statement showing the wage-bill paid to Arabs and Jews, and if it be found that the Arabs did not receive their full share, that more Arab labour be employed to make up the difference.
5. That the wage-bill be divided equally.
6. That a weekly statement, showing wages paid to Arabs and Jews, be submitted to Government and a copy of same be forwarded to the Union, in order that the Government and the Arabs may be satisfied that the clause of the contract which deals with the percentage of work allowed to Arabs is being carried out properly.

"This protest was submitted on September 10, 1937."

No satisfaction having been received, a further protest on the same subject was addressed to the Director of Health in Jerusalem in the middle of November 1937.

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Experts* (Massachusetts, 1928), pp. 464, 465.



Only less remarkable than the growth of Tel Aviv has been the development of the Jewish urban population in the two cities of Haifa and Jerusalem. These have absorbed the majority of the remainder of the post-War immigrants, perhaps 50,000 each. The two cities, however, owing to the mixed nature of their population and the far greater degree of Mandatory control, do not manifest the same essentially Jewish characteristics, except in certain quarters. On the plain between Haifa and Acre the industrial development and the acres of monotonous but hygienic Jewish workers' houses are worthy of special attention.

From this survey it is evident that the Jewish settlement in Palestine is overwhelmingly urban in character. Zionism has thus failed to accomplish the aim which was expressed by Dr Weizmann to the Supreme Council at the Peace Conference in 1919. By a Jewish National Home, said Dr Weizmann, we mean "the creation in Palestine of such conditions as should enable us to establish between 50,000 and 60,000 Jews *per annum* there, and to settle them on the land."<sup>1</sup> In view of the limited area of cultivable land in Palestine and the density of the existing population, such a plan was, of course, chimerical from the beginning.

There has been, however, a very considerable rural settlement. Jews have acquired in all about a sixth of the total cultivable land of the country, and a much higher proportion of the irrigable land suitable for intensive farming. By means of great expense of capital they support on this land, on a higher standard of living, a number of agriculturists which is equal to that which Arab agriculture supports on a corresponding area. Of the 55,000 Jews who are calculated to be engaged in agricultural pursuits some are in the older pre-War settlements, administered by the P.I.C.A., and the rest in the more specifically Zionist settlements, established for the most part since the War, on land held by the Jewish National Fund. The older settlements have by now become self-supporting rural communities, not dissimilar to corresponding communities in Gentile countries. They have preserved much of the older tolerant spirit towards the Arab population, and Arab peasants may still be seen in their streets. The trees which surround the settlements are a pleasant feature of the countryside, which in Arab districts is generally bare of trees, and there is little of the ghetto atmosphere about the older Jewish villages, such as Rehovot, Ness Ziona, Rishon-le-Zion,

<sup>1</sup> *Political Report of the Zionist Executive to the Twelfth Zionist Congress*, p. 22.



Hadera, and, in Galilee, Rosh Pinnah. These settlements have given proof of permanence, though the children who grow up in them, like children of the countryside elsewhere, are apt to forsake the land for the attractions of the towns.

An entirely different type of settlement is to be seen in the communal villages. These are established on land of the Jewish National Fund from which Arab labour is absolutely excluded. There are now more than sixty of these settlements. The system on which they are conducted is similar to that of 'collectivized' villages in Russia, with the difference that the Palestinian system is voluntary, while the Russian system is State-controlled and depends on compulsion. All property is held in common, and the association of man and woman for the purpose of begetting children is not necessarily marked by any religious or legal ceremony. Observers are unanimous that the system of bringing up the children, under specially trained staff, results in very healthy and happy-looking children, though many people are repelled by the absence of home life as that is understood in non-collectivized society. A certain squalor and unloveliness, of which many visitors complain in the settlements, is perhaps to be attributed to incomplete emancipation from a tradition inherited from the horrible slum conditions in which many Central European Jews live.

These communal villages are, in fact, communities of idealists who display a great deal of endurance and heroism in taking to life upon the land under conditions of great austerity. How far they may be said to be self-supporting in the sense that an Arab village is self-supporting, and what probability there is of their permanence, are very much disputed points. Sir John Campbell, in 1928, stated that in his opinion the results obtained in this Jewish colonization were far below those achieved in the settlement of agriculturists in Greece after the Græco-Turkish exchange of population, and he reported definitely that "the broad fact which emerges is that no single colony is at present on a sound economic ground, irrespective of the date of its establishment."<sup>1</sup>

He also wrote :

I did not find a single colony . . . which did not have further demands to make. There appeared to be no feeling that, after a certain point, improvements must come gradually as the resources of the colony increase ; that to the battle-cry of ' self-labour ' should be added the sounder and more effective battle-cry of ' self-help.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Experts*, p. 437.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



A highly qualified Jewish observer gave the following six reasons for the popularity of the settlements with the Jewish immigrants, who are mostly very young men and women. These are : (i) the Zionist ideal ; (ii) the Zionist aspiration for a return to manual labour ; (iii) the Zionist ideal for a return to the land and the desire to 'redeem' Palestine ("Each member of a collective settlement," he writes "is sure that by his efforts he is preparing the ground for the immigration of further pioneers from Central and Eastern Europe") ; (iv) the Socialist ideal ; (v) the support of a whole series of Jewish financial and technical institutions which foster the growth of new collective settlements, which also receive continual advice and assistance from the Jewish Agency, the Keren Hayesod, and the Jewish National Fund ; (vi) their specialization, discipline, and sense of comradeship.<sup>1</sup>

An interesting account of the psychological atmosphere of one of these communities is given in Mr T. R. Feiwel's *No Ease in Zion*. A perpetual group life, he says, is not easy. Many of the weaker members drop out, and it is no accident if here and there, in every commune, one or two members have quietly killed themselves, escaping from a strain which they could bear no longer. Yet for the majority it is a good life, better than strap-hanging in suburban trains. Yet is it enough for them simply to have escaped from capitalist life, if their action leaves the outside world just as it was, even within the Jewish National Home ? Besides, there are problems more obvious even than that. The members of Mishmar Haemek, for example, are no longer the poorest in the land. "They are equipped, subsidized, settled." Most of them have the chance of a holiday in Europe at least once in every four or five years.

Mishmar Haemek has thousands of trees to-day. The neighbouring Arab village, poorest of the poor, has one solitary tree. How can the members of the commune square this with their social ideals ? Can they help their Arab neighbours ? No ! They know well enough that they desire the Jewish National Fund to purchase their land for further Jewish settlement. . . . Under cover of night refuge is found from the grim reality of Palestine in an intellectual Ersatz Israel. Palestine, for these young people, is still a place where eventually eight or ten or twelve million Jews will be settled, yes, Palestine and—vaguely—the neighbouring countries.

In this vast plan the communes are Socialist islands, preserving and preparing for the Socialism to come. . . . Psychologically these

<sup>1</sup> Summarized from *Handbook of the Jewish Communal Villages* (Jerusalem 1936).



political visions with which these young Jews first came to Palestine as exalted adolescents, and to which they have clung since, in spite of everything, are necessary; the vision of the Jewish Socialist state, in which Jewish and Arab proletarians will live in peace and freedom, is necessary to hide the reality of the dirty Arab hovels and their wretched inhabitants, only a few hundred yards beyond Mishmar Haemek's barbed-wire fence.<sup>1</sup>

The communal settlements appear to be supported by Zionist agricultural experts not because they consider them an ideal system of agriculture or because of any permanent value as a social experiment, but because they appeal to the young Jew, who by this means can be brought into intimate contact with the soil.

In any survey of the Jewish population in Palestine several other divisions deserve mention. There is, for example, the important Orthodox community known as "Agudat Israel." This group holds itself apart from the Zionist Organization on the grounds that the latter does not give sufficient importance to the Mosaic Law, and "that it is incompatible to have the people of Israel without the authority of the Torah." It believes, however, that "Almighty God has concluded an indissoluble covenant between the people of Israel and the Holy Land." It therefore demands that, "pursuant to the letter and the spirit of the Mandate, which has been so wonderfully put at the command of the fulfilment of the prophecies and the prophets, no restrictions in immigration and in land sales be made."<sup>2</sup> Agudat Israel claims to represent 50,000 Jews in Palestine. This claim may be exaggerated; but as the representatives of the Torah-observing Jews are, in fact, those Jews who have kept Israel a separate people during the last two thousand years their influence is by no means to be overlooked, however much they may seem for the moment to be swamped beneath the multitude who are inspired by purely secular and nationalistic motives.

A political body which also keeps itself apart from the Zionist Organization is the "New Zionist Organization," generally known as the Revisionists. These are a political party, and were until his death in 1941 led by Vladimir Jabotinsky, mentioned earlier as organizer of the Jewish legion. The name 'Revisionists' indicates that they demand a 'revision' of the Mandate, in the sense that Transjordan shall be included in the area to which the provisions of the National Home apply. This party has always

<sup>1</sup> T. R. Feiwel, *No Ease in Zion* (London, 1938), pp. 275-287.

<sup>2</sup> Royal Commission Minutes of Evidence, 3012.



stated that the aim of Zionism is a Jewish state, and it demands the formation of a Jewish armed force. The Revisionists have the reputation of resorting on occasion to violent measures. Some years ago they were accused of the responsibility for the murder of the Agency leader Arlosoroff,<sup>1</sup> and in the Arab rising of 1936-39 they were made a scapegoat by the Jewish Agency whenever cases of Jewish reprisals against Arabs took place. Mr Jabotinsky, as we have seen, believed that it might on occasion be advantageous to the Zionist movement to be divided into separate wings which can disown one another's actions while working for the same aim.<sup>2</sup>

The Hebrew University, situated in the vicinity of Jerusalem, now gives university instruction, through the medium of Hebrew, to some seven hundred students. These are nearly all Jews of Central European origin: the number who have come from Near Eastern countries is negligible. Owing to the language of instruction being Hebrew, and the spirit prevalent among the students one of Zionist nationalism, not more than about half a dozen Arab students have hitherto profited from the facilities which it offers.<sup>3</sup> The staff includes a number of distinguished professors, and there is an excellent library. The budget amounts to £90,000 annually, of which two-thirds has to be collected from donations and subscriptions. Among the staff is a group of men who favour a more friendly outlook towards the Arab population than that of the Jewish Agency. They claim that the sympathy and co-operation of the Arabs are essential to the satisfactory establishment of the National Home, and they are prepared to make considerable concessions in order to gain their goodwill. This group, however, commands little or no allegiance among the Jewish masses: such influence as it possesses is derived from the character of the individuals who compose it and the prestige which some of them enjoy in Jewish circles of the United States of America, from which most of the funds necessary for the support of the National Home are derived.

The National Home was endowed a few years before the War of 1939 with a first-class orchestra, composed of Jewish players drawn from the various orchestras of Europe and America. Its

<sup>1</sup> The Revisionist accused of the murder was convicted by the first court, but released by the Appeal Court on a point of law. The conviction had in any case given rise to much public controversy.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> Arab students who desire higher education proceed to the American and French Universities at Beirut, to the Dar el Uloom or the Egyptian University in Egypt, or to Europe.



standard of playing is equal to that of some of the best European orchestras, but it is, of course, a product of world Jewry, not of Palestine or Palestinian Jewish culture. Its maintenance is made possible by a subsidy provided from outside Palestine.

Industrial activities in Palestine which are entirely, or principally, due to Jewish energy and capital include the Ruthenberg Electric Works, the Nesher Cement Factory, the Dead Sea Potash Works, the Shemen Soap and Perfumery Factory, and a host of minor undertakings. As was to be expected, in view of Jewish activities in the larger world, Jewish Palestine is endowed with a network of financial institutions which is probably unparalleled in a community of such a small size.

It remains to be considered how far this achievement could be said to be fulfilling the aims of Zionism. These, as we have seen, were, in Herzl's conception, the elimination of anti-Semitism by removing a sufficient number of Jews (three or four millions) from the countries where it was prevalent, and the raising of the status of Jews in general by means of a new Exodus which would have the result of forming them for a second time into a nation with a territorial basis like other peoples. Far from achieving the first of these aims, the establishment of the National Home in no way reduced the pressure in the great Jewish centres in Poland or Rumania, or mitigated anti-Semitism in Germany. Meanwhile it has introduced anti-Semitism into the Near East, and is endangering the very existence of the immensely ancient and hitherto secure and wealthy Jewries of Iraq and Egypt. There are, moreover, indications that the Zionist policy followed by the British Government has had the effect of drawing the attention of the British people to the Jewish citizens of England and of stimulating a perceptible anti-Semitic movement there also.

Whether, as a result of Zionist activities, Jews are more respected than before in the world as a whole is an open question. Certain Gentile enthusiasts outdo Zionists in their praise of the Jewish achievement, but it is hard to estimate how general this enthusiasm is. It is, perhaps, safe to say that the general effect has been to call more attention to Jewish activities and to the differences which divide them from the Gentile population, without this greatly affecting the attitude of the general public towards Jews in one direction or the other.

The motive of national regeneration, through agriculture, normal labour, and a healthy 'national' existence, also plays a great part in Zionist idealism, notably in the writings of Ahad



Haam and A. D. Gordon. There is good ground for thinking that the average Jewish worker in Palestine has benefited in this respect, and has become a more normal and healthy type. The Royal Commission of 1936, impressed by the energy, enterprise, and devotion displayed by Zionists, went so far as to say that they thought it impossible for any unprejudiced observer to see the National Home and not to wish it well.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the National Home, as it existed at the end of 1935, was very far from being what it needed to be to fulfil the purpose of national regeneration in any large sense. For the National Home was, in the first place, dependent for its existence upon the armed forces of a non-Jewish Power. In the second place, it was economically dependent upon the wealth of world Jewry. Worst of all, the Jewish Agency, not through its own fault, had the fatal defect of enjoying many of the privileges of Government without the responsibilities, which in the last resort were the Mandatory's. The Agency's interpretation of its duty of "co-operation," for example, can be judged from the official reports in which it describes its relations with the Palestine Administration. On page after page of these we find such phrases as "to bring pressure to bear"; "had repeatedly to voice its protest"; "Jews would be unable to co-operate"; "one outstanding political feature of this period was the growing conflict with the Administration"; "was compelled to join issue" with the Government; "a considerable amount of argument ensued"; "had to take exception to the fatal defect of official policy"; "could not but view with growing alarm" the course adopted by Government; "lodged a strong protest"; "lost no time in making it abundantly clear to Government that there could be no question of its agreeing to such a course"; "pressure on Government continued unabated"; "found itself precluded from accepting Government's offer"; "feels impelled to make public its position"; "is compelled to lodge a strong protest."<sup>2</sup> Government's decision is "glaringly in contrast with the urgent needs of the Jewish masses in the Diaspora"; in regard to Government's statement "Jewish Agency can only observe" that the methods adopted by the Government lead to "complete negation" of the principle which Government professes to observe; Government's action "further accentuates the iniquity" of its allocation; Government's action "reduces the whole system to a travesty";

<sup>1</sup> Royal Commission Report (1936), p. 124.

<sup>2</sup> *Political Report of the Executive of the Jewish Agency* (Jerusalem, 1937), pp. 7-36.



"the Jewish Agency regrets that it is unable to accept"; "it cannot acquiesce"; "it must oppose with the utmost determination"; "it feels sure that Jews will support this stand and resolutely oppose" the Government's action.<sup>1</sup> Every one of the last eleven phrases occur in a document of less than fifty lines. Moreover, the ready access which the Jewish Agency enjoyed to the highest officials of the Government gave it a privileged position which appeared to the Arab population to result in its exerting an undue influence in Government's deliberations and decisions. An example may be quoted from the Minutes of Evidence of the Royal Commission (December 15, 1936). The question was being discussed of proposed legislation to protect the Arab agriculturist.

LORD PEEL. Of course, you have [in Palestine] no representative assembly where these things could be discussed at all?

DR B. JOSEPH (Legal Adviser to the Jewish Agency). We have no representative assembly, but we can discuss them quite as well in the office of the Chief Secretary.

The principal difficulty in Zionism, however, is that the Jewish National Home, as pictured in Zionist aspirations, is something altogether too large to be established within the little land of Palestine, particularly seeing that it is already the homeland of another people. This essential contradiction of Zionism has been expressed from the Jewish point of view as follows: Zionists, says a Jewish writer,<sup>2</sup>

avail themselves of the still-living religious tradition which has never forgotten Zion and the site of the Temple, but they have replaced the idea of a Messiah by the idea of a nation. The most distinguished Zionists, and in particular Herzl, openly declared that they considered the utilization of the religious longing for Zion as expedient and, indeed, essential. Without it the Jews could not be set in motion. This opportunistic dragging in of Messianism is the original sin of Zionism, whose only basis should have been, and still can only be, the self-help which Pinsker described as self-emancipation. This can only be realized in a Jewish state. When Theodore Herzl wrote his grandiose improvization on that theme Palestine was for him simply a land, like any other land, which seemed to offer room for Jewry. His plan was the redemption of the Jews, all of them, from the status of outcasts, by the founding of an independent state of their own.

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Executive of the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency for Palestine* (Jerusalem, 1937), pp. 354 and 355.

<sup>2</sup> *Ordo*, No. 1.

But once the movement had become involved in the "vague dream of a Jewish renewal in Zion, the goal of freeing all Jewry was thereby abandoned, simply because there was not room for them in the Holy Land."

Another Jewish writer thus expressed the same conviction :

Some Jewish thinkers of the nineteenth century saw the ideological confusion of modern Zionism. They saw clearly that while the purely mystical longing for Zion could be realized in the form it had taken for centuries, and while the modern nationalist ideal could also be realized if a suitable territory were found, together they were impossible of realization, for Palestine could not possibly solve the Jewish problem. . . . After half a century of effort, of infinite sacrifices and tremendous labour (for the amount of unselfish idealism and sheer self-sacrifice which has gone into the colonization of every inch of ground here is astounding), after spending at least a billion dollars, Zionism can show less than 400,000 Jews in Palestine, of whom certainly not more than half are colonized in a manner that can be called lasting, and the Jewish problem remains more unsolved than ever. For Palestine has not even absorbed the natural increase of European Jewry.<sup>1</sup>

Because the Zionist movement is not willing to admit this inherent contradiction in its aim it blames the Mandatory Government for the situation which it has itself brought about. And because the Mandatory Government is committed to administering an instrument designed to realize the Jewish Zionist aspirations with which the British Government announced its sympathy in the letter to Lord Rothschild it is forced into attempting the impossible. The result is great inconvenience to itself, a cruel disappointment for world Jewry, and a grave injustice to the Arab population of Palestine, which is absolutely innocent of any responsibility for the situation brought about by the action of Jewish and English Zionists.

<sup>1</sup> Albert Viton, "Can Palestine Arabs be Cowed?" in *The Christian Century* (April 13, 1938), p. 463.



## CHAPTER XI

### ECONOMIC ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY

WE HAVE already mentioned the outbreaks of violence in 1920 and 1921, in which a number of Jews were killed. We have also mentioned the Arab casualties at the time of the demonstrations of 1933. In 1929 there occurred an outbreak on a much larger scale. The country had been practically denuded of military forces, and in the course of the week which elapsed before order could be restored 133 Jews and 67 Arabs were killed. A veritable massacre of Jews took place in Hebron and in Safad. These early outbreaks were of an entirely unorganized and spasmodic character. Public feeling was agitated: some episode, in itself small, was sufficient to set the trouble going. The explosion having occurred, the tension was relieved: a Commission would then be appointed and report that the trouble was due to the Arab desire for independence and the Arab fear of Zionism. A few weeks later all would be proceeding apparently as before. Apparently, for in reality the pressure was becoming greater every year, and every outbreak brought home to the Arabs with increasing force the fact that the reassuring statements of the Government were statements only, and that the result of the actions of the Administration was the ever-increasing prospect of the establishment of a Jewish commonwealth.

With regard to the question of land sales, we have seen that already in 1930 Sir John Hope Simpson had reported that "it has emerged quite definitely that there is at the present time . . . no margin of land available for agricultural settlement by new immigrants." He established the fact that there was a large landless class among the Arabs. This was vehemently denied by the Zionists and their supporters, but the statement was categorically confirmed by Sir Laurie Hammond, a member of the Royal Commission.<sup>1</sup> The failure of the Government to deal with the question of land sales during the six years which followed the Hope Simpson Report was one of the principal causes of the disorders of 1936. An equally important cause

<sup>1</sup> "Each day it seemed to me to grow clearer that each side—the Jews and the Arabs—had definite grievances and both had justifiable claims. It



was the regulation of immigration solely by the principle of the "economic absorptive capacity of the country." Under this system immigration was never subject to regulation at the Government's discretion. All legal immigrants were allowed to introduce their near relatives, provided that these were not of an age to enter the labour market. Any person could become an immigrant provided that he "satisfied" the Migration Department that he possessed £1000 capital at his free disposal. Any student or person of religious profession was also admitted provided that his maintenance in Palestine was guaranteed. The Administration was not even allowed to use its discretion as to the number of labour immigrants who should be admitted. It was compelled to undertake a survey of the market for Jewish labour twice every year and to issue certificates for the maximum number of labourers whom it appeared could be maintained in Palestine during the next six months. In doing this it apparently could not, or at any rate did not, take into consideration such factors as the absorptive capacity of the country over a longer period than six months, the alleged existence of a large surplus population in the Arab villages, or the strain which the immigration might put upon Arab social and economic conditions. Such factors as the effect of the immigration on the Arab mind were entirely ruled out. The Administration was, moreover, forced every six months to hear itself bitterly criticized by the Jewish Agency for not accepting its demands in their entirety, and to listen to a repetition of this criticism from the Zionist-inspired Press and politicians in Great Britain.

It is important to realize that the six-monthly controversy between the Agency and the Administration on the subject of immigration was not a discussion concerning the desirability or otherwise of admitting a greater or less number of Jews to Palestine on political or other grounds, but simply the rejection by the Agency of the Government's scientific appraisal of facts.

In evidence before the Royal Commission the Head of the Migration Department of the Palestine Administration implied that the Agency demand was, in general, two and a half times larger than was justifiable. This can be deduced from the following interrogation concerning the method of

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was, for instance, obvious that there was a large landless element. Sir J. Hope Simpson had been, he thought, quite right on his report on that point."—Sir Laurie Hammond, reported in *The Jewish Chronicle*, May 13, 1938.



calculating the absorptive capacity used in the six-monthly investigations :

SIR HORACE RUMBOLD. To take an illustration, if there is a factory at Tel Aviv which requires twenty people, they would put in for twenty more workmen for that factory ?

THE COMMISSIONER FOR MIGRATION. Yes.

SIR HORACE RUMBOLD. And that, multiplied by the different enterprises for which they want labourers, would compose their schedule ?

THE COMMISSIONER FOR MIGRATION. It probably would. Usually, I will not say always, some mention is made of available labour, and deductions are made. It means a shrinkage in both ways, because I do not accept necessarily that the factory needs twenty ; I may say it needs only twelve.

SIR HORACE RUMBOLD. You write it down ?

THE COMMISSIONER FOR MIGRATION. I write it down, and then my idea of potential labour may be somewhat higher than the Jewish Agency's idea, so that in the end, perhaps, instead of getting twenty, they might only get eight.

The Royal Commission later declared that it was satisfied "that the figures in the schedules authorized by the Government have normally been as high as the position demanded." The difference between the estimates of the Agency and those of the Government would, therefore, be of merely academic interest were it not an excellent example of the Agency's interpretation of its duty of "co-operating" with the Government in the appraisal of the economic absorptive capacity of the country. In particular it is of interest to note that the violent language on the part of the Agency, quoted at pp. 148 and 149, was used on an occasion on which the Agency had put in an estimate fourteen times that of the Government. The reason for the submission of this unusually exaggerated demand was to be sought in Jewish psychology. When unemployment was bad the Agency demanded an abnormally big schedule in order to maintain a favourable psychological attitude among Jews abroad, and so stimulate the supply of capital and capitalist immigrants. As long ago as 1928 Sir John Campbell commented adversely on this practice. "The very strong trend," he wrote,

was always in the same direction, to increase the number of immigrants to the maximum extent possible. This was considered



necessary, or at least very valuable, for propaganda purposes also. The disastrous results of this policy are now obvious.<sup>1</sup>

Elsewhere he stated :

The idea was firmly established that over-expenditure was essential for propaganda purposes ; that Jewish psychology was such that funds could not be obtained unless the Palestine Organization could point to new colonies " established," to additional lands " acquired," to a steady and large increase in the number of immigrants.

Sir John Hope Simpson, discussing the suspension of the labour schedule in 1930, which he declared to be perfectly justified on economic grounds, added :

To leave the economic argument for a moment, it is said that there is an important psychological aspect of the question. . . . The suspension of labour immigration, it is alleged, has created the impression that the British Government is apathetic in the matter of the National Home. . . . As a result the flow of capital to Palestine and of subscriptions for the settlement work in that country have both been affected.<sup>2</sup>

The argument concerning Jewish psychology may be valid from the Zionist point of view, but to take it into consideration in estimating absorptive capacity is to introduce precisely that psychological element whose elimination was the sole merit which could be urged in defence of the principle. The same applies to the argument occasionally advanced in the past, and since the Hitler persecution a major theme of Zionist argument, that the schedule should be enlarged on account of Jewish distress outside Palestine.

The falsity of the charge that the Government unduly restricted immigration is best refuted by the fact that it is evident, when regard is had to the size of Palestine and its existing population, that the Jewish immigration of 1935 was the greatest that has ever been known into any country. It corresponds to an immigration into Great Britain in one year of 2,000,000 people ; while the total Jewish immigration into Palestine since the First World War corresponds to an immigration into Great Britain of 20,000,000 people.

The actual figures of legal immigration from 1920 to 1937 were as follows :

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Experts*, p. 464.

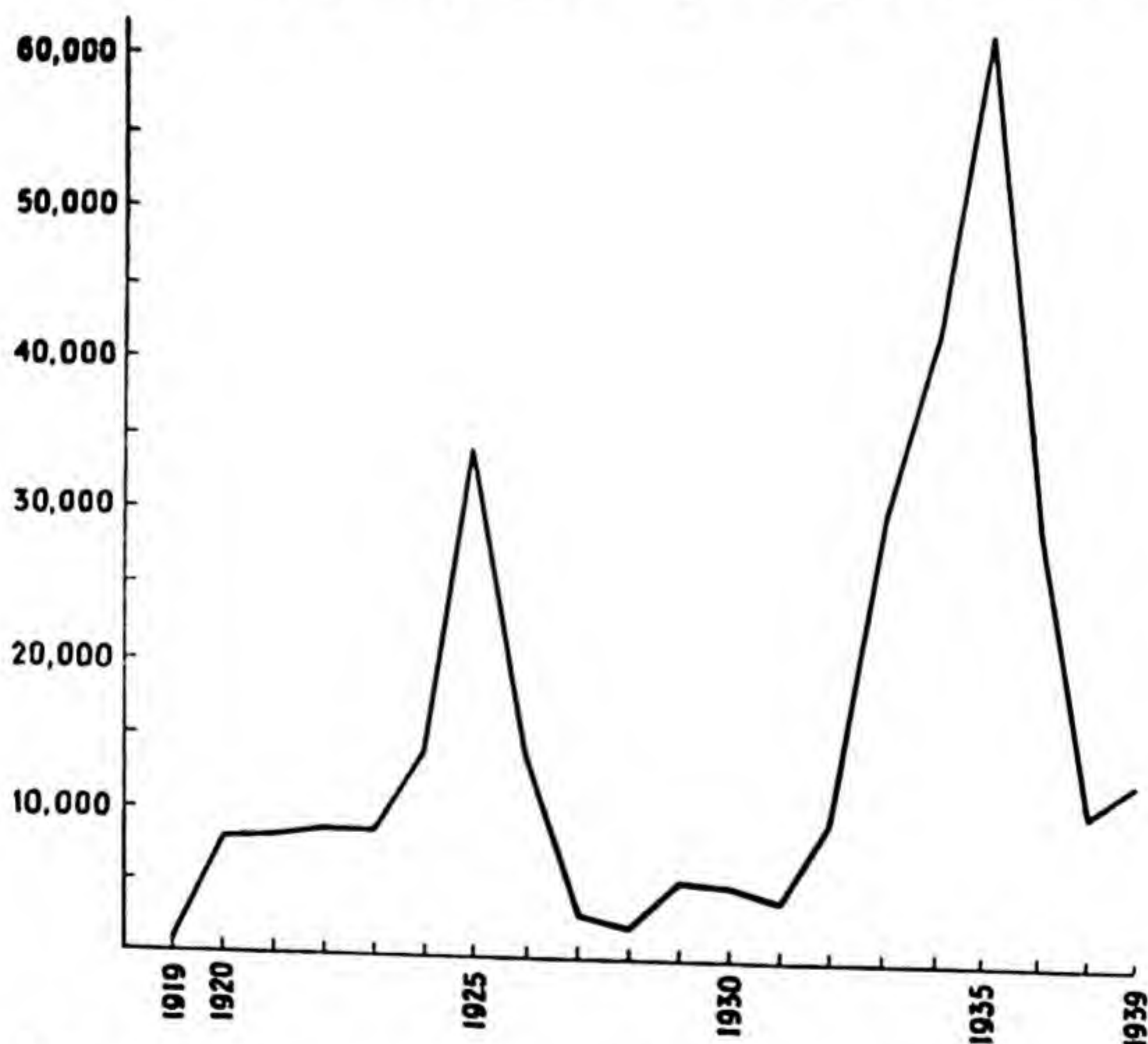
<sup>2</sup> Hope Simpson Report (London, 1930), p. 139.



1920 . . .	5,514	1929 . . .	5,249
1921 . . .	9,149	1930 . . .	4,944
1922 . . .	7,844	1931 . . .	4,075
1923 . . .	7,421	1932 . . .	9,553
1924 . . .	12,856	1933 . . .	30,327
1925 . . .	33,801	1934 . . .	42,359
1926 . . .	13,081	1935 . . .	61,844
1927 . . .	2,713	1936 . . .	29,727
1928 . . .	2,178	1937 . . .	10,536 <sup>1</sup>

These figures do not show Jewish emigration from Palestine. This, in the years of 'crisis'—1927, 1928, and 1937—was very considerable.

Represented graphically, this immigration gives this curve :



<sup>1</sup> From July 7, 1937, immigration was subject to a "political high level." But as this level fixed was higher than the level of the "economic absorptive capacity" as estimated in previous years, the figure of 10,536 may be included without hesitation on the same basis as the figures for previous years. Government statistics give the net immigration for 1937 as 4614, very much below the "political high level" suggested by the Royal Commission.

A glance at this curve shows that immigration has proceeded in waves, a fact which is in consonance with what is known of immigration elsewhere. The factors regulating these waves are as obscure as those which are responsible for trade 'booms' and 'depressions' in general. Certain general statements can, however, be made.

Of the two waves of immigration into Palestine the first reached a climax in 1925, the second in 1935. Each of them left the country richer, more developed, and with an increased population. But the failure to regulate the immigration on any rational principle led in each case to serious temporary economic disturbances, and in the second case precipitated a political catastrophe.

The crisis which followed the 1925 immigration was attributed by all impartial observers to the uncontrolled immigration. Thus Sir John Campbell wrote in 1928 :

In recent years there have been two crises ; both were undoubtedly due to excessive immigration. . . . The lesson is that the greatest care must be taken not to sanction immigration in excess of the absorbing capacity of the country. . . . Under-estimation can do little or no harm—at the worst it would only retard to some slight extent the progress of the Zionist movement.<sup>1</sup>

Dr Leo Wolman, another expert employed by the Zionist Organization, wrote :

Such rapid growth of population as characterized the expansion of Palestine in the years after 1922 is, under almost any circumstances, bound to produce dislocations that require time and planning to adjust. Much of the unemployment in the country during 1926 and 1927 was, in fact, the consequence of this hasty and unbalanced flow of Jewish immigration.<sup>2</sup>

Sir John Hope Simpson wrote :

In that year [1926] the provision of relief works for Jewish immigrants who could not otherwise obtain a living was actually necessary. . . . It was an episode of which no Government would willingly contemplate the recurrence. The importation of large numbers of immigrants to be employed on new industries of extensive character whose economic success is quite problematical might well cause a crisis compared with which the "so-called" crisis of 1926 would indeed seem unimportant.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Experts*, p. 464.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 495.

<sup>3</sup> Hope Simpson Report, p. 118.



We have already seen that the attempt made by Lord Passfield in 1930 to give effect to some of these recommendations was frustrated by a political campaign on a grand scale, set in movement by the Zionist-inspired politicians and Press of Great Britain. It thus came about that when in 1932-33 there began a second wave of immigration no benefit was derived from the experience of the first wave. This was the more serious in view of the greatly increased size of the second wave, brought about by pressure of Jewish refugees and capital forced out of Germany by the Nazi revolution.

The immediate material result of this influx was seen in the rapid growth of the city of Tel Aviv, and to a less extent of Jerusalem, Haifa, and Jaffa. It was also seen in the doubling of Government revenue: this was chiefly derived from duties on imports.

The psychological effect was equally important. Hitherto the most ardent Zionists had hardly anticipated that the Jews would ever become a majority in Palestine. Thus Mr Leonard Stein, in a book published in 1925,<sup>1</sup> had written:

From the facts at present available there is only one inference to be drawn. Palestine will find room in course of time for some hundreds of thousands of Jewish immigrants; it will become a country in which the Jews form a much larger percentage of the population than in any other part of the world; but there is little likelihood of its absorbing them in such numbers as will make them an actual majority. These facts must be faced, but to regard them as fatal to Zionist hopes implies a somewhat crude and mechanical conception of the Jewish National Home.

At the Non-partisan Conference to consider Palestinian Problems, held at New York by leading Zionist and non-Zionist Jews in 1924, Dr Weizmann himself estimated the total absorptive capacity of Palestine at 1,500,000 persons over and above the existing population.<sup>2</sup>

Five years later Dr Magnes, in his pamphlet *Like All the Nations?* mentioned 3,000,000 as the possible future number of

<sup>1</sup> *Zionism*, p. 201. (Suppressed in later edition.)

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings of the Non-partisan Conference to consider Palestinian Problems* (New York, February 17, 1924), p. 22. Since that date the population has increased by about 500,000 Jews and Arabs. On this basis, therefore, the absorptive capacity of all Palestine at the present time is about 1,000,000. Since the natural increase of the Palestinian population is between thirty and forty thousand annually, an immigration of between ten and fifteen thousand a year would, on Dr Weizmann's own calculation, completely exhaust the absorptive capacity of the country within about twenty years.



the population of Palestine, and added, "As for myself, if I could know that in the course of a long, long period a Jewish community of 1,000,000 souls—one-third of the population—was possible here, I should be well content."<sup>1</sup>

With the mass immigration which began in 1933 all common sense was thrown to the winds. The theory which had been advanced by the Jewish Agency to Sir John Hope Simpson in 1930, and repudiated by him, to the effect that Palestine could be made a great exporting country, "a little Oriental Belgium,"<sup>2</sup> and that neither raw materials nor markets mattered, but only the "human factor"—that is, the Jewish immigrant—was revived. It was seriously maintained that it was only necessary to pour in sufficient immigrants and sufficient capital in order that Tel Aviv should rapidly grow to the size of Los Angeles, and that a number of satellite cities on the coastal plain should attain the dimensions of Barcelona, Marseilles, and Naples.<sup>3</sup>

By 1935, as the wave of immigration neared its climax, the Jewish masses in Palestine, as in Poland, were encouraged to think that because there had been 30,000 immigrants in 1933 and 42,000 in 1934, therefore there could be 80,000 in 1935, 150,000 in 1936, and so on *ad infinitum*.

All kinds of curious calculations were based on this theory. Thus a well-known Zionist demagogue published a book early in 1936 in which he wrote :

Towards the end of the current year there will be about 400,000 Jews in Palestine. By appropriate efforts it would be possible, within the five years 1936-40, to bring this figure to the potential number of 1,000,000 souls. This would require the immigration during this period of time of 150,000 young couples capable of breeding—that is to say, 30,000 couples annually, apart from old people and children.<sup>4</sup>

At the Zionist Congress of 1935 Mr Ben Gurion, Chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive, in the words of a Jewish writer,

laid down a Zionist five-year plan for the immigration of 1,000,000 families, five million people altogether. The whole Middle East, as Ben Gurion saw it, was destined to be the stage of the new Jewish

<sup>1</sup> J. L. Magnes, *Like All the Nations?* (Jerusalem, 1930), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Palestine Memorandum submitted to Sir J. Hope Simpson by the Jewish Agency* (London, 1930), p. 76.

<sup>3</sup> Royal Commission Report (1937), p. 299.

<sup>4</sup> Y. Buchmil, *Problèmes de la renaissance juive* (Jerusalem, 1936), p. 284.



renaissance. . . . Solomon, quoted in Ben Gurion's speech, could only have had small ambitions compared with Ben Gurion.

It was fantastic, part of that strange world of unreality in which Zionists lived and from which they even drew their strength.<sup>1</sup>

The Administration, though itself a little dazzled by its mounting revenues and impressive surplus, could not but be aware of the falsity of this view. Indeed, it made one or two half-hearted and belated attempts to mitigate the onrush. When the proportion of doctors to the population was already three times as high as it is in England restrictions were placed on the entry of immigrant doctors, and actually enforced, in spite of "the steps taken to avert this measure"<sup>2</sup> by the Jewish Agency. The Administration even ventured to suggest raising the sum required by capitalist immigrants to LP.2,000. About this, however, the Jewish Agency "made strong representations." "Similar representations," says the Agency's report, "were made at the same time by the Executive in London, and the Secretary of State finally announced that the proposal had been abandoned."<sup>3</sup>

That the Government, while lacking the courage, or the power, to act upon its convictions, was aware of the danger of the mass immigration appears from the following passage in the Agency's Report. "In its conversations with representatives of the Jewish Agency early in 1936 Government made no secret of its view that the immigration of 1935 had been excessive, and that the repetition of the same figure, let alone its increase, was undesirable."<sup>4</sup> The position of the Administration, faced with the realities of the Palestine situation, yet bound by the Mandate to accept the Agency's "co-operation," and tied down by the instructions issued by the Colonial Office, was not enviable. Meanwhile the state of mind of the Arab population can easily be imagined. The prospect of the complete "subordination of the Arabic population, language, and culture" became in their minds, for the first time, an immediate practical possibility. In the circumstances the Administration had no alternative but to resort to the old device of a "reassuring statement." On this occasion it took the form of a renewed offer of a Legislative Council (November 1935). This was immediately characterized

<sup>1</sup> Feiwel, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the Executives of the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency for Palestine*, p. 356.

<sup>3</sup> *Political Report of the Executive of the Jewish Agency*, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.



by the Zionist Press as "a policy of conciliating the Arab leaders at the expense of the Jewish National Home." Dr Weizmann, in an interview with the High Commissioner, made it at once "perfectly clear" that "the Jews would be unable to co-operate in any such Legislative Council," which they regarded as "untimely, dangerous, and likely to increase the plane of friction between the Arabs and the Jews." Rabbi Blau, representing Orthodox Jewry, added that "to their regret the efforts of the Government and the Jews had not yet succeeded in convincing the Arabs of the benefits which Jewish settlement had conferred on Palestine as a whole. . . . Palestine was the only hope of hundreds of thousands of Jews in the Diaspora, especially in Germany."<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile events were beginning to move rapidly, and entirely to escape from the control of the Administration. In the first place, the wave of immigration had reached its maximum and was beginning to recede. The crisis was precipitated by the outbreak of the Abyssinian War, and the position worsened with such rapidity that the labour schedule, which was the gauge of the economic absorptive capacity of the country, fell in the autumn of that year from 8000 to 3250. The position was indeed acute. The Agency, as its *Report to the Twentieth Zionist Congress* has stated, was faced with the problem of dealing with the labour immigration which was still flowing into the country during the winter of 1935-36, and in many cases finding no employment whatsoever. The crisis was acute, and unemployment threatened to reach catastrophic proportions.<sup>2</sup> The Agency therefore made strenuous efforts to force Jewish labour into spheres which it had not previously succeeded in entering, or which it had abandoned during the years of high wages in the building industry.<sup>3</sup> One of these spheres was port work in Jaffa. This claim was in itself reasonable, since the development of the port was largely due to Jewish activity. The Administration, however, fearing immediate trouble if the attempt were made at this moment, urged the postponement of the "conquest" of this sphere of labour until later. For the situation of Arab labour in Jaffa in the autumn of 1935 was as unsatisfactory as that of Jewish labour in Tel Aviv. The vast capital sums introduced in the preceding years had stimulated building activity, in Jaffa

<sup>1</sup> *Political Report of the Executive of the Jewish Agency*, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the Executives of the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency for Palestine*, pp. 395 and 384.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 383.



as elsewhere, to an unprecedented degree. There had thus been drawn into the city several thousand Arab workers, labourers displaced from the land, as well as Bedouin from South Palestine and a number of Transjordanians and Hauranis. As we have seen, these were housed in unspeakable conditions, in 'tin-town' quarters, all over the city.

When the crisis came hundreds of these men found themselves suddenly deprived of work.

At this moment a fresh cause of trouble arose. In the middle of October some cement cases consigned to Tel Aviv *via* the Jaffa Custom-house were discovered to contain 254 Mauser pistols, 90 revolvers, 500 bayonets, and 500,000 rounds of ammunition.<sup>1</sup> The impression on Arab minds can well be imagined: the Arab Labourers Federation of Jaffa sent the following telegram<sup>2</sup> to the Officer administering the Government:

What is the purpose of the contraband ammunition? Is it to kill the Arabs or expel the English?

We demand emphatically equality in armament or the confiscation of Jewish arms, both legal and illegal.

The Officer administering the Government thereupon issued a "reassuring statement" to the Press. In evidence before the Permanent Mandates Commission the same official subsequently stated that he had also received a delegation of Arab ladies, and

had done his best to impress upon them that, first, there was no proof that the arms were intended for Jews. That [he said] he had found very difficult, because all the evidence seemed to point to their having been imported by the Jews. . . . For it would not occur to them [the Arabs] that if the importer were an Arab he would consign arms to Tel Aviv and have them collected by a Jewish firm and dumped in Tel Aviv.<sup>3</sup>

The reassuring statements of the O.A.G. had, in these circumstances, very little effect upon Arab opinion, and the Arab port workers in Jaffa, against the advice of their political leaders, declared a one-day strike of protest on October 26.

On December 1, in view of the steady increase of unemployment,

<sup>1</sup> This was subsequently discovered to be the latest of several such deliveries. In 1937 the Royal Commission estimated that the supply of illegal arms in Jewish possession was sufficient to equip 10,000 men (Royal Commission Report, p. 200).

<sup>2</sup> October 16, 1935.

<sup>3</sup> *Minutes of the Permanent Mandates Commission, 32nd Session, p. 63.*

the Arab Labourers Federation addressed the following letter to the District Commissioner :

I have the honour to inform you that we have more than 1000 members of our Society unemployed, and therefore request permission to demonstrate on Friday, 6th instant. The demonstration will take this route : The Federation premises, Martyrs Square, Awad's Street, Bustrus St, King George Ave., Jerusalem St, Salahi St, then return to the premises of the Federation.

2. The reasons for this demonstration are to ask for the relief of unemployment, to protest against Jewish picketing, the Judaization of the Port, and the policy of immigration according to the absorptive capacity of the country.

Hoping that the permission be issued.

We are,

Yours faithfully,

(Sgnd) MICHEL MITRI, C.E.  
PRESIDENT ARAB LABOURERS  
FEDERATION<sup>1</sup>

To this letter the District Commissioner sent a reply forbidding the holding of the demonstration. A few weeks later the Administration, no doubt in response to the " unabated pressure " of the Jewish Agency, gave to a Jewish contractor the contract for building, in the heart of Jaffa, three Government schools for Arabs. The contractor proposed to employ exclusively Jewish labour. The Arab Labourers Federation thereupon addressed the following letter to the District Commissioner :

*February 11, 1936*

I beg to draw your kind attention to the fact that giving the construction of the three school premises to a Jewish contractor who engaged only Jewish labourers was the subject of great sensation and protests among the Arab labourers, who considered this act to be completely against their legal rights for the following reasons :

1. The buildings are situated in an Arab area.
2. The Government has never given a contract to an Arab in a Jewish area.
3. Arab labourers engaged in Jewish areas were dismissed by force in many cases.
4. Unemployment among the Arabs is very serious.

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<sup>1</sup> G. Mansur, *The Arab Worker under the Palestine Mandate* (Jerusalem, 1938).



I believe that you will agree with me that the Government should have studied the present psychological situation of the Arab labourers before signing such a contract, which is forcing out their feelings since they are suffering terribly from the present economic crisis and are looking for any kind of work just to keep their families and themselves.

Lately the labourers held several meetings, and I could feel that they are determined to have their full rights in these buildings, and I have been urged to request you to deal with this serious question and to give your final decision as soon as possible.

I am also requested to inform you that my Society is prepared to supply you with any number of labourers of any craft and at any time for this work and any other work. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile warning signs were visible in many other directions. In January 1935 Arabs belonging to a tribe who were being evicted from the land bought by Jews attacked the police with stones. In the ensuing scuffle an Arab was shot dead. In August Arabs attacked Jews who were ploughing on land whose ownership was disputed. In the course of this episode an Arab was shot dead by a Jewish watchman. In the autumn it was discovered that a terrorist band, composed of peasants, had been formed to take revenge on Jews by shooting them. It operated in the Haifa district, under the leadership of a Sheikh (Izzeddin Kassam) of great reputation for his strict observance of his religious duties. The band was surprised by the police: four members, including the leader, were killed and five captured. The funeral of the Sheikh was attended by a large crowd, and it became evident that Arab opinion regarded him as a martyr who had risen in defence of his country against the attempt to make Palestine a Jewish commonwealth. On November 25 the representatives of the various Arab parties, whom public opinion had forced to sink their differences, presented the following demands to the High Commissioner:

- (1) The establishment of democratic government in accordance with the Covenant of the League of Nations and Article II of the Palestine Mandate.
- (2) Prohibition of the transfer of Arab lands to Jews, and the enactment of a law similar to the Five Feddan Law in Egypt.
- (3) (a) The immediate cessation of Jewish immigration and the formation of a competent committee to determine

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

- the absorptive capacity of the country and lay down a principle for immigration.
- (b) Legislation to require all lawful residents to obtain and carry identity cards.
  - (c) Immediate and effective investigation into illicit immigration.

To these demands the High Commissioner replied with assurances concerning the Legislative Council and, subsequently, concerning proposed legislation to protect the small-holder. In February and March 1936, however, the former project was debated in the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Two Jewish members in each House spoke against the project, as well as a number of British politicians. The Arab point of view was almost completely ignored, and it was obvious that the project had been killed. Many people thought that the High Commissioner, who had emphasized his determination to see the project through, would at the last moment restore the balance by offering his resignation. Instead of this, however, he continued on a second period of office which had been announced on New Year's Day, 1936.

Since, however, it was obvious to the Government that satisfaction of some sort must be given to the Arabs, the High Commissioner was authorized by the Secretary of State to propose that an Arab delegation should proceed to London to discuss the situation with the representatives of the Government.

This offer was made on April 2, 1936, and accepted unanimously by the Arab leaders. Before the delegation had been selected, however, the events occurred which served to kindle the conflagration which raged for more than three years.



## CHAPTER XII

### DISORDERS AND THE ROYAL COMMISSION

THE history of the disorders of 1936 is well-known, and we need here only recapitulate briefly the main episodes. On April 15, 1936, Arab highwaymen held up a number of cars on the Tulkarm-Nablus road. After relieving the passengers of their valuables they released those of them who were Muslim or Christian Arabs or Europeans, but took three Jewish travellers and shot them, killing one and mortally wounding another. On the following night two Arabs living in a hut near the Jewish settlement of Kfar Saba were shot and killed. One of the victims before dying described his assailants as Jews: in all probability the murder was an act of reprisal by Jews for the shooting on the previous day. On the 17th the funeral in Tel Aviv of one of the Jews murdered by the highwaymen was made the occasion for a demonstration. The police were stoned, inflammatory speeches were made, and there were cries of "We don't want this Government! We want a Jewish army!" Some of the demonstrators attempted to march on Jaffa, but were stopped by the police. The funeral was followed by attacks on the few Arabs who were employed in Tel Aviv, and a number of Arab carters passing through the town were assaulted or threatened. On Saturday, the 18th, Arabs were again attacked, an Arab bus was stoned, and Arab builders in a Jaffa quarter adjoining Tel Aviv molested. During neither of these two days were any cases of Arab reprisals reported.

On the morning of Sunday, April 19, rumours became current in Jaffa that two Arabs had been killed in Tel Aviv. The effect of these rumours was to produce immediate acts of violence by Arabs, which in their turn produced Jewish reprisals against Arab traffic coming from Tel Aviv. Order was restored by two in the afternoon, but not until several Jews had been murdered by the mob in Jaffa and two Arabs shot by the police. During the next three days further rioting took place, mostly in the border districts of Jaffa and Tel Aviv. In all sixteen Jews were murdered and five Arabs killed by the police.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Report by His Majesty's Government on the Administration of Palestine for 1936* (London, 1937), pp. 7, 8. Attempts made by the Jewish Agency to dispute



The effect of this series of events was to cause Arab discontent to take a definite political form, at first peaceful. A National Committee, formed at Nablus on April 20, proposed the declaration of a general strike until satisfaction was given to Arab demands. Local committees were rapidly constituted, and the strike soon became general throughout the country, except in Haifa. On the 25th an Arab Higher Committee was formed under the Presidency of Haj Aminel Husseini, Mufti of Jerusalem and President of the Muslim Supreme Council. The following demands were formulated in a letter addressed to the High Commissioner :

- (1) The prohibition of Jewish immigration.
- (2) The prohibition of the transfer of Arab lands to Jews.
- (3) The establishment of a National Government responsible to a Representative Council.

On this occasion the Government, deceived by its apparent success in 1933, did not consider it necessary even to issue a "reassuring statement" or make the least conciliatory gesture. The strike thereupon continued, being accompanied by a slow but perceptible increase of scattered disorder, such as attacks on Jewish buses, the burning of Jewish crops, and the cutting of telephone-wires throughout the country. This continued until May 16, on which date the marked deterioration in the situation was shown by the shooting of several Jews as they left a Jerusalem cinema.

Meanwhile the eternal question of the six-monthly labour schedule came up for consideration. As we have seen, the financial situation, if a view of longer than six months was taken, warranted a complete suspension of labour immigration. The Agency, however, acting, no doubt, on the "psychological" principle mentioned by Sir John Campbell and Sir John Hope Simpson, demanded 11,200 certificates. The High Commissioner, who was still convinced that the trouble would be over in a week or two, and did not wish to give the Agency and the Zionist supporters in London a chance to accuse the Administration of "yielding to violence," granted 40 per cent. of this demand—that is, 10 per cent. more than he had sanctioned six months previously. In fact, the Administration on this occasion took an unusually liberal view of the absorptive capacity of the country, apparently

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the accuracy of this account were completely refuted by the Accredited Representative before the Permanent Mandates Commission (*Minutes, 32nd Session, p. 145*).



as a demonstration against the Arabs. So at least the Jewish Agency understood it, for in their Political Report for 1936 they say :

It would be difficult to overrate the effect of the grant of the schedule upon the militant groups in the Arab camp. Not only had the demand for the complete stoppage of Jewish immigration not been granted, but the Government had taken a step in the opposite direction.<sup>1</sup>

Realizing, however, that a "reassuring statement" would now be necessary to balance the effect of this deliberate affront to common sense,<sup>2</sup> it was announced in the House of Commons on the same day that the Government had decided to send a Royal Commission to Palestine.

This announcement was received without enthusiasm by the Arabs, and the Arab Higher Committee decided that they could not call off the strike unless Jewish immigration was suspended until such time as the Commission had reported.<sup>3</sup>

Simultaneously with these events the Administration took another step of very doubtful wisdom. This was to sanction the loading and unloading of merchandise at Tel Aviv beach. The creation of an all-Jewish port had been one of the objectives of Zionism since the days of Herzl, who had envisaged its being situated at Cæsarea. For many years past the Zionists had been trying to secure permission to establish a separate port at Tel Aviv. Hitherto the Administration had always refused to sanction a rival port within two miles of the existing Arab port. The Agency now urged the measure on the Government on the grounds that the strike at Jaffa made it necessary for Tel Aviv to import directly. This was obviously a pretext, for the facilities at Tel Aviv could not possibly be of any practical value for many months, and meanwhile the undertaking would be an added expense. The granting of permission would therefore be primarily an act of Government reprisal against Jaffa and the Arabs. The nature of some of the arguments used by the Agency on this occasion can be seen from the following extract

<sup>1</sup> *Political Report of the Executive of the Jewish Agency*, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> The proposal to suspend immigration was supported by many independent residents, and a number of people urged the Jewish Agency voluntarily to request Government for a suspension. Such action on its part might have transformed the situation.

<sup>3</sup> *Report by His Majesty's Government on the Administration of Palestine for 1936*, p. 25.



from a letter addressed to the Government on May 13 by the Political Representative of the Jewish Agency :

Government's refusal to take immediate action in this matter will inevitably strengthen the impression, widespread among both Jews and Arabs, that Government is not interested in hastening the end of the strike. From such an impression to the pernicious thought that the strike serves some useful purpose for the Government is but one step, and it is my painful duty to state that I find many people taking this step without hesitation.<sup>1</sup>

The tone of this letter, with its outrageous insinuations against the motives of the Government, approaches that of blackmail. The Administration, however, granted the request two days later.

It is hardly surprising that after these measures there was, in the language of the annual Government Report, "a perceptibly increasing amount of lawlessness and disorder" in all districts. Armed bands appeared, which were apparently organized, controlled, and well supplied with ammunition. Among them was a certain number of volunteers from Syria and Iraq.<sup>2</sup>

On June 19 the Government, in order to facilitate police operations, blew up 237 houses, mostly tenements, in a working-class quarter in Jaffa. Unfortunately they chose to announce that it was carrying out this measure as part of a town-planning scheme. As we have seen, the failure of the Administration to do anything to remedy the abominable housing conditions of the newly created Arab proletariat in Jaffa was a contributory cause of the violence of the outbreak in that city. It was thus singularly unfortunate that an action which rendered several thousand people homeless should have been announced as a philanthropic measure. The matter was raised in the courts, and the action of the Administration was severely criticized by the Chief Justice. As soon as possible after the delivery of this judgment the latter was constrained by Government to leave the country, a measure which necessitated special legislation for providing him with a suitable pension.

As the rising steadily became more serious the Administration endeavoured to enhance the effect of its promise to send a Royal Commission by showering proclamations from aeroplanes upon the villagers. These urged the peasantry to abandon violence

<sup>1</sup> *Political Report of the Executive of the Jewish Agency*, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> *Report by His Majesty's Government on the Administration of Palestine for 1936*, p. 13.



and to entrust the investigation of their grievances to the Royal Commission, whose importance was described in glowing terms. Nineteen years before some of these same fellahin had been flogged and imprisoned by the Turkish authorities for the offence of picking up and treasuring proclamations which had been dropped from British aeroplanes on behalf of the Sherif of Mecca. These had urged them to "come and join us" who are fighting "for the liberation of all Arabs from Turkish rule so that the Arab Kingdom may again become what it was during the time of your fathers."<sup>1</sup>

In 1936, however, the fellahin, mindful that six years had elapsed since the publication of the Hope Simpson Report, and that land sales and evictions were still continuing as before, refused to respond unless a promise of some definite conciliatory action were given. By this there was generally understood to be meant an undertaking on the part of the Government to suspend immigration during the Commission's proceedings. Such an undertaking would undoubtedly have ended both strike and disorders within twenty-four hours. The Colonial Secretary, Mr Ormsby-Gore, however, while willing to rouse hopes that the Government would take this step, was not willing to give a definite undertaking which he could not later ignore. Thus on July 22, in reply to a question in the House of Commons, he stated that

as regards the suggestion that there should be a temporary suspension of immigration whilst the Commission is carrying out its inquiry, I am not at present in a position to make any statement as to the intention of H.M. Government beyond saying that their decision will be taken in due course on the merits of the case, and that there is no question of its being influenced by violence or attempts at intimidation.

This statement, while far too vague to be acceptable to the Arabs, provoked violent indignation among the Zionists. On August 19 spokesman of the Executive of the Elected Assembly of Palestinian Jews remarked, "Is it not outrageous that our immigration and the murderous attacks carried on by others should be placed on the political scales as balancing one another. . . . We shall never endorse the revolting travesty implied in such a juxtaposition."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shaw Commission Report (1930), p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> *Political Report of the Executive of the Jewish Agency*, p. 28. The word "travesty" is a key-word in Zionist correspondence with the Palestine Administration.



In view of this deadlock matters steadily proceeded from worse to worse. Terrorism began to be used against those who were considered lacking in patriotism within the Arab ranks, especially against those who had sold land or acted as land-brokers. Meanwhile very serious repercussions were noticeable beyond the frontiers. Far more important than the arrival of a few volunteers and a well-known Arab guerrilla leader was the intense feeling aroused throughout the Arabic-speaking world and in many other Muslim countries. The full effect of this intensification of Arab sentiment was not immediately seen, but it was already significant enough. Anti-Semitism began to raise its head in the Near East, and the large and prosperous Jewish community in Iraq began to find its centuries-old friendly relations with the Arab majority seriously imperilled. In fact, something was being done in Palestine which was very definitely prejudicing the position, if not yet the rights and political status, enjoyed by Jews in the oldest home of Jewish settlement. The Grand Rabbi of Bagdad found it advisable to issue a statement disowning all sympathy with Zionism. The Arab rulers too found themselves impelled to intervene. First the Emir Abdullah, then the King of Saudi Arabia, and finally the Foreign Minister of Iraq, acting in his private capacity, offered their service as intermediaries. All these attempts broke down in face of the insistence of the Palestinian people on some reassuring action, as well as good words, on the part of the British Government.<sup>1</sup>

The latter, seeing that no progress was being made in restoring peace, on September 7 announced their intention of sending an entire further division of troops to Palestine. "In spite," said the official communiqué,

of the greatest forbearance exercised by the British authorities, with the full approval of His Majesty's Government, whose chief concern has been to restore peace between the different communities in Palestine by measures which would entail the smallest possible amount of suffering and loss of life, the political strike has continued, accompanied by outrages and guerrilla warfare.

What measures had been taken, other than police and military action against the Arabs and the founding of the Tel Aviv port, "to restore peace between the different communities" remains a mystery. His Majesty's Government were, however, certainly justified in stating that "the situation which has been created

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 109.



is a direct challenge to the authority of the British Government in Palestine."

The arrival of the reinforcements made matters very much more difficult for the insurgent peasantry. At the same time the sufferings and losses of the townspeople, who had maintained an almost complete interruption of all business for nearly six months, were very great. In these circumstances a way out of the deadlock was found by an appeal to the Arab Higher Committee from the Kings of Iraq and Saudi Arabia and the Emir Abdullah, who were believed to have received an intimation from the British Government that, while no concessions could be made under duress, Arab grievances would receive due consideration in the event of a restoration of order. This read :

The prevailing situation in Palestine has greatly pained us. We, in agreement with our brothers the Arab Kings and the Emir Abdullah, ask you to resort to quietness in order to avoid bloodshed, relying upon the intentions of our friend the British Government and its declared desire to ensure justice. You may rest assured that we will continue our endeavours to help you.<sup>1</sup>

On the next day the Arab Higher Committee appealed to the people

to put an end to the strike and the disorders as from Monday morning, the 12th October, 1936, and to ask all members of the nation to proceed, in the early morning, to their places of worship, in order to hold services for the martyrs and to thank God for the power of patience and fortitude with which he has endowed them. They will then leave their places of worship, open their places of business, and resume their normal occupations as God is our aid.<sup>1</sup>

"The response to this manifesto, was immediate ; work was resumed generally throughout the country and, with the exception of a few minor incidents, disorder ceased."<sup>1</sup>

The strike and the disorders had thus come to an end without having achieved their aim of securing any conciliatory gesture from the British Government. On the contrary, one result had been that Jews had been officially armed in large numbers, and that permission had been given for the construction of a Jewish port as a rival to Jaffa. Hundreds of Jewish unemployed had found work as supernumerary police, in making new roads, in supplying the needs of the troops, and so forth. In many other

<sup>1</sup> *Report by His Majesty's Government on the Administration of Palestine for 1936*, p. 34.



ways also the Zionist hold over the British Administration had been strengthened.

On the other hand, the policy of preserving peace by means of "reassuring statements" to the Arab population was obviously at its last gasp. Within a few weeks more, or, at the most, months, the Government would be compelled either to abandon a policy by which Palestine might be turned little by little into a Jewish commonwealth, against the wishes of the "general population," or to resort frankly to force. Moreover, the question had now been transferred to an altogether larger sphere. It was no longer a question of the British Government, Zionist Jews, and the Permanent Mandates Commission against the Palestine Arabs. The cause of the latter was henceforth in the keeping of the whole Arabic-speaking world—indeed, of the whole of the Muslim world that still cared for the faith of Islam. Again, while the anti-Semitic movement in Germany was destroying one of the centres of Jewish strength in Europe, the Arab rebellion was concentrating the attention of the British public on the Arab case. It was not certain how much longer Zionism would be able to count on the unquestioning support of the British Parliament, and so of the British armed forces.

The quiet of October 1936 was therefore not the quiet of peace, but that of an armed truce. The British Government had hoped that by dealing lightly with the insurgents, by putting as few of them as possible to death, and by inflicting light sentences on the others it would avoid putting bitterness into the hearts of the Arabs. It did not realize that the loss of their freedom and the Judaization of their country was to them a bitterness greater than the bitterness of death. In any case nearly a thousand Arabs had been killed by the troops and police: would it have made any difference if courts, military or civil, had hanged or shot a few dozen more?

On November 5, 1936, the Royal Commission at last left London for Palestine. We have seen already that any good effect that the original promise of sending a Commission might have had was more than undone by the announcement on the same day of an unusually generous labour schedule for Jewish immigrants. In the same way the sailing of the Commission was signalized by the announcement of the issue of yet another labour schedule. In spite of the obvious worsening of the economic situation, the Government declared that "they have decided that a temporary suspension of immigration would not be justifiable on economic or other grounds." It was added, however, that "His Majesty's



Government have thought it right, in the present circumstances obtaining in Palestine, to ask the High Commissioner to take a conservative view of the economic absorptive capacity of the country." This very ambiguous announcement apparently meant that the Administration would return to its former method of appraising the absorptive capacity, and not issue such an exceptionally generous schedule as it had done, for political reasons, in May. The form in which the announcement was made, however, appeared to be intended to give the impression that some sort of concession was being made to the Arabs, while in reality doing nothing of the sort.

This may have deceived some persons in England, but it did not deceive the Arabs. The almost inevitable result of the announcement was a refusal on their part to co-operate with the Commission.

The latter, therefore, inaugurated its investigations in circumstances in which the action of the Secretary of State had destroyed every hope of conciliating Arab opinion. For there is no apparent reason why the schedule in question should not have been issued a month earlier or a month later. Its announcement on the day that the Commission sailed could not but be regarded by Arab opinion as a deliberate affront.

The Commission remained in Palestine for about three months, of which the greater part was occupied by listening to Jewish witnesses. The Arab boycott remained complete until the Commission was on the point of departure. It was then revoked, on the strength of advice from the Arab Kings. The Arab case was presented in less than a week. The boycott, though brought about principally by the Colonial Secretary's action, was none the less disastrous for the Arabs; for, in spite of the great efforts of the Commission to be impartial, the fact that they listened to the Jewish point of view almost daily for six weeks and to the Arab point of view for seven days only is apparent in many passages of their report.

The Jewish case, so far as it was presented in public, consisted in the first place of an account of Jewish difficulties in Central Europe and of the circumstances which accompanied the issue of the Balfour Declaration. This was designed to show that the Declaration had envisaged the eventual creation of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine and Transjordan, and that the conditions of Jewish life in Central Europe at that time made such an aim highly desirable. In the second place it was directed to demonstrating that the terms of the Mandate had been drawn up



expressly to fulfil this purpose. It was then suggested that the development of the National Home had taken place on sound lines, and that, as an example of colonization, it was a highly creditable achievement. It was suggested that this development had been hampered rather than assisted by the British Administration. In particular "hundreds of grievances and requests" <sup>1</sup> were put forward.

The Arab case was put very shortly. Emphasis was laid principally upon the fundamental injustice of establishing a National Home for one people in a country which was already the National Home of another. Though the legal aspect was well presented, inadequate treatment was given to illustrating the hundred and one ways in which this process affected the life and welfare of the general population of Palestine, individually and collectively.

The Arab evidence was given entirely in public, but a very large number of private sessions was held at which non-Arab witnesses were heard. It is evident that in some of these serious allegations were made against the Administration in general and against certain Arab officials in particular. In one well-known case the result appears to have been the dismissal of the official concerned without his being given any opportunity to speak in his own defence.

On concluding its investigations in Palestine the Commission returned to London, where it heard, among other witnesses, Mr Lloyd George and Mr Jabotinsky.

During the six months which passed until the publication of the Report security remained on the whole fairly good, though there were many isolated cases of highway robbery, attacks on Jews, and attacks upon Arabs who were regarded as unpatriotic by the majority party. The state of Arab opinion was, however, such that an immediate renewal of disorder was to be anticipated if the Report did not make a serious attempt to deal with the grievances of land sales and immigration. In the spring the six-monthly labour schedule was issued as usual. In view of the vanished absorptive capacity of the country this was very small. The Jewish Agency thereupon issued a series of violent protests, of which a specimen has been given above, <sup>2</sup> in the endeavour to give the impression that the Government had arbitrarily reduced the schedule as a result of the disorders. This charge was duly echoed by the Zionist supporters in Press

<sup>1</sup> Royal Commission Minutes of Evidence, 3786.

<sup>2</sup> P. 149.



and Parliament, and the theory was actually set about that the fall in immigration was due to the smallness of the schedules. The fact was, of course, that the smallness of the schedules was due to the over-immigration of the preceding years, which had, temporarily at least, exhausted the absorptive capacity of the country. This was conclusively shown by the fact that capitalist immigration, which was not subject to restrictions, fell equally with the labour immigration, and that the number of emigrants began to approach the number of immigrants.

In April and May reports began to appear in newspapers traditionally sympathetic to Zionism that the Commission intended to recommend a partition of the country. By this the country towns of Hebron and Nablus, with the districts around them, would be annexed to Transjordan, while the rest of the country became a Jewish state. Both Arab and Zionist leaders at once declared their hostility to any sort of partition.

As the time of the publication of the Report drew near, however, it became apparent that many of the most influential Zionist leaders were expecting such a proposal to be made, and were prepared to accept it on certain conditions. A cleavage also appeared in the Arab Higher Committee. The National Defence Party, headed by Ragheb Bey Nashashibi, seceded, in order to be free to take an independent line if the Report should prove in any way acceptable to Arab opinion. They seem to have thought that the Government might propose some compromise scheme by which Jewish areas were granted autonomy within an Arab state, or even outside it. Such a scheme they were prepared to consider, and would probably have succeeded in persuading the majority to accept. They were also indignant that no protest had been issued by the Arab Higher Committee when a leading member of their party had been shot at and wounded in Jaffa a little while before.

The Report of the Commission was issued on July 7, 1937. To the astonishment of the Arab leaders and of most neutral observers, it recommended a definite tripartite division of Palestine. A Jewish state was to be set up in most of the coastal plain and Galilee, while Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and a strip of land running to the sea between Tel Aviv and Jaffa was to be put under a permanent British Mandate.<sup>1</sup> What remained of the country would be attached to Transjordan, which would form an

<sup>1</sup> This corridor had been originally suggested by Sir Mark Sykes, who designed it as a means for bringing Russian pilgrims to Jerusalem without their passing through Jewish territory.



independent Arab state. These recommendations had been accepted by the British Government.

In spite of the enthusiasm which the idea of a Jewish state aroused in the Jewish masses, it is certain that the idea of any kind of partition was a violent shock to Zionist opinion. Nevertheless it immediately became clear that the majority of official Zionist leaders considered that the formation of a Jewish state in part of Palestine and the setting up of a poverty-stricken and backward Arab state in its neighbourhood was the best, if not the only, method of eventually achieving the Zionist aim of a Jewish commonwealth in all Palestine.

As for the Arabs, they had never conceived that the Commission could possibly propose anything so utterly opposed to all that they had fought for during twenty years. After all, the British Government had always hitherto denied that there was any intention to "subordinate the Arab language, culture, or population in Palestine," or to do anything which prejudiced the rights or position of the non-Jewish sections of the population. Now it was openly proposed to set up a Jewish state in the richest part of the country and a Mandatory Zone in Jerusalem, and to divide between them practically every resource, moral and material, which the country possessed.

Two factors, and two only, prevented an immediate resumption of violence. The first was the confidence of the Palestinian Arabs in the support of the Arab countries and their rulers. The second was the frank admissions of the main portion of the Royal Commission's Report. This contained a detailed examination of the working of the Mandate and the conclusions to be drawn from it. Although these were worded with the greatest deference for Zionist susceptibilities, they were nevertheless a striking justification of Arab claims. The Report, for the first time, acknowledged, as the Arabs had always maintained, that the Mandate could be interpreted as intended to prepare the way for the establishment, in certain circumstances, of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine—that is to say, for the purpose of achieving the "subordination of the Arabic population, language, and culture." It recognized that under the Mandate, as hitherto interpreted, no self-governing institutions could be established until the Jews became a majority. It stated bluntly that while Arab grievances concerning immigration and land sales could not be considered as legitimate under the terms of the Mandate, yet they were so sincerely felt that the Mandate could not be carried out except by a degree of repression which would be abhorrent





THE ROYAL COMMISSION'S PARTITION PLAN

to the British people. It acknowledged also, by implication if not directly, that the Palestine question could not be settled without due consideration of Arab sentiment outside Palestine.

The British Government had accepted these conclusions, and expressly acknowledged the impracticability of the Mandate as a basis for the administration of Palestine. Since the Partition Scheme was, in Arab eyes, even more impracticable, they believed that the day would surely come when the British Government would abandon that project also.

As long, therefore, as the Administration abstained from taking any new steps towards establishing a Jewish commonwealth under a Mandatory régime, now declared by the Royal Commission to lead along a dark path of repression without daylight at the end, the Arabs were content to let the logic of facts do their fighting for them.

For the time being, therefore, they preserved an exemplary calm.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE DARK PATH OF REPRESSION

THE Government Statement of Policy, issued on July 7, 1937, declared that His Majesty's Government, in supporting a solution of the Palestine problem "by means of partitioning," were much impressed by the advantages which partition offered to both the Arabs and the Jews. With regard to the former people, they stated that

the Arabs would obtain their national independence, and thus be enabled to co-operate on an equal footing with the Arabs of the neighbouring countries in the cause of Arab unity and progress. They would be finally delivered from all fear of Jewish domination and from the anxiety which they have expressed that their Holy Places should ever come under Jewish control. The Arab state would receive financial assistance on a substantial scale from both His Majesty's Government and from the Jewish state.

These sentences appear unworthy of the Royal Commission's Report, in which they occur. They are, indeed, themselves what the Commission call a "striking illustration of the disadvantage which the Arabs suffer whenever the field of controversy shifts from Palestine to the United Kingdom."<sup>1</sup>

In surroundings in which Zionist sentiment was very vocal and the Arab point of view almost unheard the Commission had elaborated a new scheme for the fulfilment of the Balfour Declaration without the least regard for the point of view of the "general population." For when it was said that "the Arabs" would obtain their national independence, what did this mean? We must assume, of course, that Palestinian Arabs were intended, for these were the only Arabs with whom the Commission was concerned. When a Palestinian Arab speaks of independence "on equal footing with the Arabs of the neighbouring countries" he can but think of a country consisting of three-quarters of a million peasants cultivating their rich orange-groves, their bananas, their cereals, their maize, their sesame, their water-melons, their tobacco, their olives, and

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Royal Commission (1937), p. 91.



their apricots. He pictures to himself the busy sea-ports Jaffa and Haifa, and thinks of the latter's connexions with Iraq and the East. He thinks of the capital and its Holy Places, Muslim and Christian, to which Palestinian sentiment is so deeply attached. If he is a Muslim he thinks also of Ramleh and Acre and of the heroic achievements of Saladin. If he is a Christian he thinks of Bethlehem and Nazareth and of the Lake of Galilee. Above all he thinks of the Palestinian soil of which his civilization is an essential and a congruous part.

Palestinian independence with any of these things removed could only be a maimed and halting thing. With almost all of them removed it would be no independence at all. Moreover, the "independence" offered by the Commission was offered to only about one-half of "the Arabs." "By means of partitioning" one-third were to be subordinated to Jewish domination immediately and for ever, while even in the new Mandatory Zone, or Corridor, there would appear to have been very good grounds for the Arab expectation "that the fate of this area would be to grow increasingly Jewish and for its Arab population to decline."<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, what guarantee of independence would even those Arabs who were to be included in the proposed Arab state have possessed? Already during the First World War Dr Weizmann had envisaged, in a conversation with Lord Robert Cecil, that it might be necessary for the Jews to construct a state in one part of Palestine until such time as they could take over the rest. In an interview on April 25, 1917, referring to the possibility of the exclusion of Galilee from the area to be allotted to the Jews, on account of French claims, he said:

Though this partition, which would carry with it the possibility of a Jewish irredenta, would be difficult for Zionists to bear and would always be considered by them as unjust, yet they would find a certain degree of satisfaction if at least Judæa were to be British. The Jews could work for one or two generations under British protectorate, endeavouring to develop the land as far as possible and counting upon a time when a just tribunal would give them the rest of Palestine, to which they have a historic claim.<sup>2</sup>

Mr Jabotinsky, the Revisionist leader, had made the following emphatic statement before the Royal Commission. "A corner of Palestine, a canton—how can we promise to be satisfied with

<sup>1</sup> *Memorandum of the Arab Higher Committee* (Jerusalem, July 23, 1937).

<sup>2</sup> Gelber, *Hatsharat Balfur Vatoldoteha*, p. 83.



it? We cannot. We never can. Should we swear to you that we should be satisfied it would be a lie." <sup>1</sup>

At least one member of the Royal Commission was indiscreet enough himself to explain the nature of the independence which he offered to the Arabs. "You will find," said Sir Laurie Hammond to a meeting of Jews on May 5, 1938,

that the National Home in Palestine, if you can get sufficient in that country to meet immediate requirements as a Sovereign Power, will be the first step, in my opinion, towards getting back into the rest of the country. It will take many years, but it will come. <sup>2</sup>

The proposed subventions, too, from the British Government and the Jewish state, so far from appearing as attractions to the Arabs, seemed to them an admission that the proposed state would not have the necessary resources on which to base an independent existence. Moreover, the subsidy from the Jewish state, apart from being insulting in itself, would no doubt have been used as a weapon with which to prevent the Arab state from following any policy which was unacceptable to Zionism.

The Commission, in many passages of its Report, betrayed the impression of its members that Arabs are by nature hostile to "progress," and that they desired independence chiefly in order to stagnate. This is an error. The Arabs, like other people, desire independence in order to progress, but to progress in accordance with the laws of their own nature, and in their own time. In order to do this they know that they need the centres in which Arab activity, moral and material, is most advanced—namely, Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Haifa.

The Arab reply within Palestine, then, was an emphatic negative both from popular feeling and from its representatives in the Higher Committee and the National Defence Party. The latter, indeed, in view of the unacceptability of the Government's proposal as a basis for negotiations, found itself in a very unhappy position. In the expectation of a conciliatory gesture from the British Government it had broken the union of the national forces. When the expected gesture was not forthcoming the influence of the seceding party was much diminished, and the lives of some of its leading members were threatened by the terrorists.

Outside Palestine the response was equally definite. Iraq made an emphatic protest, both through a personal statement of

<sup>1</sup> Royal Commission Minutes of Evidence, 5648.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *The Jewish Chronicle* of May 13, 1938.



the Prime Minister and in a note dispatched to the League of Nations. The Syrian Government forwarded a protest through the French as Mandatory.

On August 8 an Arab Congress was held at Bludan, in Syria. This, which was the most representative pan-Arab Congress yet held, was attended by leading personalities from all the Asiatic Arab countries and from Egypt. It passed unanimously a resolution declaring that Palestine was an "inseparable portion of the Arab homeland."

The only notable Arab who did not immediately declare his opposition to the scheme was the Emir Abdullah of Transjordan, who stood to be the chief, and, indeed, the only, Arab beneficiary of the project. The result of his ambiguous attitude was a great loss of popularity in the Arab world. In some cases where his portrait was displayed with those of other Arab kings and princes it was noticed to have been disfigured. Later the Emir, in conformity with Arab opinion in general, let it be known that he also was opposed to the project.

In England the project was not received by the British Parliament with the same enthusiasm that it had been by the Cabinet. After a vigorous debate in both Houses of Parliament the motion proposed by the Colonial Secretary to the effect "that this House approves the policy of His Majesty's Government relating to Palestine as set out in Command Paper No. 5513" was withdrawn, and it was resolved instead

that the proposals contained in Command Paper No. 5513 relating to Palestine should be brought before the League of Nations with a view to enabling His Majesty's Government, after adequate inquiry, to present to Parliament a definite scheme taking into full account all the recommendations of the Command Paper.

The next stage was the meeting of the Permanent Mandates Commission. The proceedings were in two parts—one the cross-examination of the British representatives, in the light of the Jewish Agency's accusations of bad faith and mismanagement; the other the consideration of the British Government's request that the Permanent Mandates Commission should recommend the Partition Scheme to the Council of the League.

In view of the fact that the Mandatory Power had itself declared the Mandate to have become unworkable, the Permanent Mandates Commission reluctantly acknowledged the fact that it probably had thus become so. It insisted, however, on the continued validity of the Mandate for the time being, and re-



gretted the abandonment of the economic absorptive capacity principle. With regard to the Partition Scheme, Mr Rappard remarked that

inasmuch as the policy now considered was only another implementation of the Balfour Declaration, it was not surprising that it should meet with the same unfriendly reception as had the Mandate. He wished to ask . . . whether His Majesty's Government . . . had realized that the objection to that proposal would be precisely the same as the objections to the Mandate, which on account of those objections had been declared unworkable.<sup>1</sup>

Mr Ormsby-Gore, who in former years had brilliantly demonstrated the workability of the Mandate, displayed even greater skill on this occasion in demonstrating that, while the Mandate had been unworkable from the beginning, the Partition Scheme was both workable and a just solution of the problem. Incidentally, however, he declared that the Government did not accept the proposal of the Commission for the "compulsory transfer" of the Arab peasantry out of the Jewish state.

The Observations of the Permanent Mandates Commission on the whole supported Jewish criticism of the Administration's conduct, though two members, Mr Palacios and Mr Giraud, dissented from censure of the Administration's handling of the disturbances or of their acceptance of a memorandum recommending the suspension of immigration which had at one time been submitted by the Arab officials. The Observations emphasized the importance of various minor reforms suggested by the Royal Commission, but contained no reference whatever to the need of protecting the peasantry against land sales. With regard to immigration, the Permanent Mandates Commission urged the reintroduction of the economic absorptive capacity principle without alluding in any way to the Royal Commission's discussion of the question and its recommendations to the contrary. The Observations recapitulated the history of the outbreak of the disturbances; in doing so they omitted any mention of the important fact that the Arabs who killed the two Jews on April 15, 1936, were highwaymen. While referring to "other breaches of law" which occurred between April 16 and 18, it omitted to say that as far as the evidence went these were exclusively caused by Jews.<sup>2</sup>

The upshot of the discussion was the reference of the Partition

<sup>1</sup> *Minutes of the Permanent Mandates Commission, 32nd Session, p. 150.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 204, 231, 232, and 233.



Scheme to the Council of the League. The Council, in its turn, rather tepidly authorized the British Government to proceed with its investigations. The chief feature of the meeting was the evidence contained in the speech of the Foreign Secretary that, under the "unabated pressure" of the Zionist Organization and its supporters in Press, Parliament, and the Permanent Mandates Commission, the Government were thinking of reintroducing that principle for regulating Jewish immigration which the Royal Commission had found it necessary to stigmatize as inadequate and ignoring factors which wise statesmanship cannot disregard.<sup>1</sup>

The discussion in the Council was followed by a discussion in the Assembly. Here, for the first time in the history of the League proceedings, the Arab as well as the Jewish case received a hearing. The French representative ridiculed the idea that Palestine could receive unlimited Jewish immigration, and he compared those who advanced this idea to the child whom St Augustine found attempting to empty the ocean into a hole on the seashore. The Irish representative spoke, with the conviction of experience, of the cruelty and injustice of a solution by partition. The representatives of Persia, Egypt, and Iraq gave measured but adequate expression to the Arab case. The debate, therefore, left the Palestinian Arab leaders with a feeling of confidence which they had never before known.

Meanwhile the Twentieth Zionist Congress had met at Zürich. After prolonged discussions a majority of 300 to 158 rejected the Partition Scheme put forward by the Royal Commission, but declared itself ready to discuss a definite plan for the establishment of a Jewish state in part of Palestine. By this it appears that a plan very much more favourable to Zionist views was envisaged. The minority rejected the principle of partition altogether.

The meaning of the resolution of the majority was made clearer, after voting, by a statement issued officially to the Press by Mr D. Ben Gurion, President of the Zionist Executive, containing the following passage :

The Debate has not been for or against the indivisibility of the Land of Israel. No Zionist can forgo the smallest portion of the Land of Israel. The Debate concerned which of two routes would lead quicker to the common goal.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Royal Commission Report, p. 300.

<sup>2</sup> *Kongress Zeitung : Offizielles Organ des XXten Zionisten Kongress*, August 15, 1937.



Dr Weizmann emphasized a similar point when, in reply to the criticism that he ought to have demanded the inclusion of the Negev (Beersheba area) in the proposed state, he declared that it was a fifth-rate colonization area, and that in any case "it would not run away."<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the situation in Palestine was tending to deteriorate. For months the peasants had been urged to rely upon the Royal Commission for the remedying of their grievances. As a result of its deliberations the Commission had now recommended a scheme more hateful to the fellahin than the Mandate, particularly to those who were to be dispossessed of their lands in the relatively prosperous and fertile Galilee. It might be true, as their political leaders suggested, that the logic of facts and the support of the Arab world would lead to the disappearance of the scheme in due course. Nevertheless meanwhile land sales continued exactly as in the past, and the Government were obviously wobbling on the question of immigration. There was, it is true, for the moment, a "political high level"; but this had been fixed at a higher rate than the economic absorptive capacity. For it was notorious at the moment that large numbers of Jewish settlers were leaving the country for the United States of America, Australia, and elsewhere, so that the net immigration into Palestine was barely half of the political high level.

The Royal Commission had recommended a great expansion of Arab education. A generous announcement of a plan to carry out this recommendation would have given immense satisfaction to Arab opinion. All that happened, however, was a statement of the Permanent Mandates Commission, that it had "noted with interest that . . . it is the intention of the Mandatory Power that there should be no standstill in the development of educational facilities."<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, in the matter of the Tel Aviv port the Colonial Secretary immediately proclaimed his intention of ignoring the Commission's recommendation. At the end of the disturbances of 1936 the Administration had made proposals for a joint Arab-Jewish working of Jaffa harbour, which was to be

<sup>1</sup> *The Jewish Chronicle*, July 13, 1937, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Minutes of the Permanent Mandates Commission, 32nd Session*, p. 233. The *Report by His Majesty's Government on the Administration of Palestine for 1938* (p. 148) contains the following illuminating sentence: "The gradual scheme of expansion of facilities for Arab elementary education which was initiated in 1933 . . . but was suspended in 1936-37, was resumed in 1937-38. As regards town schools, the term 'expansion' means the provision of the elementary-school places necessary to maintain the number of annual entries at the same figure as in 1933."



approached by a special road from Tel Aviv. When, however, the Agency informed the Government that they "could only consider" such a suggestion if it were put forward by the Arabs of Jaffa, and that meanwhile "the development of the port of Tel Aviv must on no account be impeded," the plan was dropped. Having gained this point, the Jewish Agency went further, and in April 1937 raised the question of the landing of passengers at Tel Aviv. Government, though it "seemed inclined to consider the proposal sympathetically," stated that it must await the recommendation of the Royal Commission on this point.<sup>1</sup> The matter therefore remained in suspense until the publication of the Commission's Report. In this the Commissioners stated quite definitely that "we should regard it as highly undesirable that the provision recently made for loading and unloading goods at Tel Aviv should be expanded into a substantial harbour quite detached from Jaffa."<sup>2</sup> In view of this categorical statement the arrangements for a joint operation of the harbour, which had been worked out in some detail, should now, one would have thought, have been promptly put in action. On July 19, however, Dr Weizmann had a confidential interview with the Colonial Secretary in which he told him, among other things, that the recommendation of the Commission for the establishment of a joint harbour for Jaffa and Tel Aviv was "perplexing" the Jews. Mr Ormsby-Gore immediately replied that "it was unthinkable that this recommendation should stand." On the next day a pro-Zionist member of the House of Commons, who was preparing to attack the recommendation of the Royal Commission on this point, was astonished at being interrupted by a categorical statement from Mr Ormsby-Gore that there was no intention of establishing a joint port at Jaffa-Tel Aviv.<sup>3</sup>

Owing to an indiscretion of the leader of the Jewish State party, Mr M. Grossmann, Dr Weizmann's notes of his conversation with Mr Ormsby-Gore were made known to the Zionist Congress and subsequently published in *The Jewish Chronicle* on August 13, 1937. On the day after their publication the High Commissioner visited Tel Aviv and informed a Jewish gathering that permission would be given for all classes of goods to be dealt with in future at Tel Aviv, and that he intended to sanction the landing of passengers as soon as the necessary arrangements could be made.

Any remnants of confidence in the Royal Commission as a

<sup>1</sup> *Political Report of the Executive of the Jewish Agency*, pp. 42-48.

<sup>2</sup> Royal Commission Report, p. 388.

<sup>3</sup> Hansard, July 20, 1938, columns 2273 and 2274.



means of remedying the grievances of the Arab population were finally dispelled by this announcement.

The lightermen of Jaffa, after appealing in vain to the Director-General of Customs and the High Commissioner, thereupon addressed the following dignified letter of protest to the President of the Arab Higher Committee :

YOUR EMINENCE,

Your Eminence has undoubtedly heard of the intention of the Government to establish a third base in Palestine for disembarking passengers, in spite of the fact that the existing two ports (Haifa—Jaffa) amply provide for the present needs of the country.

By such means the Jews will gain control of the economic resources of the country, by the aid of their financial influence and the pressure they bring to bear on the Steamship Agencies, to say nothing of the Government pressure applied against us and the help and encouragement which it gives to the Jews.

We have carried out our professional duties to the entire satisfaction of all concerned. We disembarked more than 100,000 passengers and their luggage during the years 1933-1934-1935 with no accident or loss of property whatsoever.

Further, on the outbreak of the disturbances, on April 19, 1936, there were more than 90 Jewish passengers and business-men in the Port. We protected them and carried them safely in our boats to their homes. We refused to be paid for this work because we had been led to do it by feelings of humanity and our Arab traditional sense of honour.

There is no justification in international law [*i.e.*, the Mandate] for the establishment of two ports in the same town ; and there can be no justification for this attitude on the part of the Government.

Your respected Committee is our only refuge. We therefore request you to study our problem from the legal point of view and to take legal steps on our behalf in case the Government persists.

Hoping your valuable efforts will finally meet with success, we most respectfully beg to remain,

THE BOATMEN IN CHARGE OF PASSENGER  
TRAFFIC IN JAFFA PORT <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A candid Zionist, writing in the *Palestine Review* of March 3, 1939, made the following comments on the Administration's attitude to the question of establishing a port in Tel Aviv : " There was no sound reason for building another harbour in the same area. All that was necessary was to build a road directly from the Jaffa port along the shore to Tel Aviv, and so insure to the Jews safety and a fair share in the work of the port. For one of those mysterious reasons which make the doings of the Government in Palestine seem like some of the more fantastic chapters in *Alice in Wonderland* this was not done. Tel



In these circumstances occasional murders of Jews began to take place once again, followed on several occasions by Jewish reprisals against Arabs. Attacks were also made upon Arab detectives and upon notables who were considered lukewarm in the national cause, and several were killed. There was also an attempt upon the life of the British Inspector-General of Police.

By the middle of September it was evident that the Government must choose between abandoning the Partition Scheme and advancing indefinitely along what the Royal Commission had described as "the dark path of repression" which has no light at the end.

Meanwhile the Administration was being subjected to tremendous pressure by the Agency, and by its supporters in the British Press and Parliament, to hold the Arab Higher Committee, and in particular the Mufti, responsible for the existing state of affairs.

The Arab Higher Committee for their part contented themselves with disowning any responsibility for the violence, without, however, displaying any zeal in endeavouring to put an end to it. It is no doubt true that they could not in any case have succeeded in doing so in view of the intensity of popular feeling, but, from the political point of view, they would have been well advised to try.

The climax came when the newly appointed District Commissioner for the Galilee district, Mr L. Y. Andrews, was shot dead by four armed men outside the Anglican church in Nazareth in September 1937.

Mr Andrews had served in Palestine with the Australian Forces during the First World War, and had remained on in the service of the Government. He was a man of great energy, who spoke colloquial Arabic fluently and was also learning to talk Hebrew. According to Jewish opinion, he was the only official who administered the Mandate as Zionists consider that it should be administered. While he had Arab friends, however, he never succeeded in winning the confidence of the fellahin.

It was one of the peculiarities of the Palestine Administration that there was no British official whose duty it was to act as intermediary between Arab opinion and the High Commissioner, and to whom Arabs could speak freely and confidentially. During the latter part of Sir Arthur Wauchope's régime the position of

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Aviv, with much shaking of heads on the part of technicians, and much diplomatic manoeuvring, got permission to build a landing pier."



adviser on Arab affairs was held unofficially by Mr Andrews.<sup>1</sup> When the Royal Commission arrived he was therefore appointed as liaison officer between the Administration and the Commission. As a result of this he was, rightly or wrongly, widely considered to have been a principal supporter of the Partition Scheme. Thus when, some weeks later, he was appointed Commissioner of the newly created district of Galilee, it was supposed that this was in order that he might prepare the way for the transfer of this area to the Jewish state and facilitate the land sales and negotiations connected with the Huleh Concession. On hearing of this appointment those most familiar with the temper of the peasantry in the north and with the nature of the secret terrorist organization which had been known to exist in the northern district since 1935 openly expressed anxiety for his life. In the weeks that he was District Commissioner, as in a previous period in which he had been Special Commissioner for security, he succeeded in reducing the manifestations of disorder in his district; but on this occasion he fell in the end a victim to assassins. In all probability the murder was the work of one of the politico-religious secret societies founded by Sheikh Kassam and carried on later by Sheikh Farhan es Saadi<sup>2</sup> and others.

There appears, however, no reason to connect the crime in any direct way with the activities of the Arab Higher Committee. It could not serve their interests, and was, in fact, strongly reprobated by them in a communiqué issued on the evening on which the murder took place. One member of the Committee had, indeed, enjoyed such friendly relations with the late Mr Andrews that he had been accused by extremists of acting as his agent. In view, however, of the constant campaign against the Committee, and of the latter's failure to defend itself by a clear and vigorous denunciation of violence, it was evident that the Government, if it was not prepared in any way to meet the Arab point of view, must now resort to further repressive

<sup>1</sup> In laying the foundation stone of the Andrews Memorial Hospital in the Jewish colony of Nathaniya Sir Arthur Wauchope, on Saturday, February 26, 1938, said, "He was a man who devoted his life to the good of the people, regardless of race or creed. No man was a closer friend, nor had I a wiser counsellor in all Palestine—justice and uprightness were the keys to his character."

<sup>2</sup> Sheikh Farhan es Saadi, a man of seventy-five, was hanged in November 1937 after a summary trial by a military court on the charge of being in possession of a revolver. The sentence was inflicted not on account of this offence, but on account of worse crimes of which he was believed to be guilty. By the peasantry he was regarded as a martyr of the same calibre as Sheikh Kassam.



measures. Of these the first step would assuredly be action against the Higher Committee.

The way was prepared, in the days following the murder, by the arrest and detention by administrative order of some two or three hundred notables, mostly known to be supporters of the Muslim Supreme Council. A week later the Arab Higher Committee and all the local National Committees were declared illegal and dissolved. Those members of the Committee who could be found were arrested in their beds and deported to the Seychelles; the most important member, Jamal Husseini, escaped to the Lebanon. Those who were abroad were forbidden to return to Palestine. Haj Amin el Husseini, Mufti of Jerusalem and President of the Arab Higher Committee, was declared deposed from the Presidency of the Muslim Supreme Council, but no attempt was made to arrest or deport him, presumably because this might have led to bloodshed in the mosque area. The reason given for the Government's action against the Arab Higher Committee was its alleged "moral responsibility" for the various acts of violence which had occurred.

As we have already stated, the identification of the Muslim Supreme Council with a particular political point of view, though the inevitable result of the Government's action in treating the Muslim majority as a religious community, was highly unsatisfactory, and had for a long time required reform. But the measures taken against the Arab Higher Committee on October 1 went far beyond this. They could be regarded by every Palestinian Arab only as a deliberate affront to national feeling and as an attempt to deprive the Arabs of their only political representation, and so prepare the way for the enforcement of the Partition Scheme. A new sullenness was apparent everywhere, together with a grim resolution to carry the struggle on to the end, cost what it might. Large deputations of peasants were seen in the streets of Jerusalem vainly seeking to lodge a protest with the Officer Administering the Government.

On the following night an isolated act of sabotage was reported on the railway-line. This was an ominous sign, for there had been no single case of sabotage since the termination of the strike a year before. Otherwise all seemed outwardly calm: one optimistic Jewish journalist went so far as to say that security could now be smelt in the air.

A fortnight passed in this way. Then, one night, it was rumoured that Haj Amin had escaped. It was soon ascertained that he had, in fact, made his way in disguise to the coast, taken



a boat, and, after an adventurous voyage, landed in Lebanese territory.

On the night of October 14 disorders in the style of 1936 occurred all over the country with a simultaneity which showed that they must have taken place on a prearranged signal.

The Government replied with severe measures. Fines up to £2000 were inflicted upon villages, and collected in kind and in cash. The houses of suspects were dynamited by administrative order and their families rendered homeless. In one case at least this form of vengeance was taken on the relatives of a man who had already expiated his crime by his death. In other cases the best houses in villages near which crime had occurred were destroyed without regard to the character of their owners. Wholesale arrests of notables and commons were made by administrative order, and soon the concentration camps housed six or seven hundred untried prisoners.<sup>1</sup>

Those persons who held that the disorders of 1936 were not the result of widespread popular feeling, but merely the work of a handful of agitators, headed by the Mufti of Jerusalem, confidently predicted that the new disorders would be over within a few weeks. When this prophecy was falsified by events it was suggested that the bands in the hills were composed of "professional" bandits hired with Italian or other foreign money and organized by those members of the former Higher Committee who had taken refuge in the neighbouring countries. It was, however, perfectly obvious from the description of those armed men who had been identified or tried that 90 per cent. of them were Palestinian peasants; and from the language which some of them used as they went to the scaffold it was evident that they considered themselves to be volunteers fighting in defence of their country. Italian propaganda there certainly had been, but its influence on the troubles was negligible; there may have been Italian money, which helped to provide the means of the troubles, but was not their cause. A well-informed Jewish paper gave the following account of the "terrorist" movement, which it stated was derived from a "moderate" Arab source:

"How many terrorists are there, that they can so effectively terrorize the entire north?" I asked.

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<sup>1</sup> Some details of Government reprisals are given in a pamphlet entitled *Searchlight on Palestine*, by F. E. Newton (Arab Centre, London, 1938). Miss Newton's account was largely confirmed by similar reports from other British witnesses. There were also cases of organized reprisals by Jews resulting on occasion in numerous deaths and other casualties.



"No more than 300 or 400 full-time terrorists in the hills," he replied, "and a few scores in the cities. But these would never be able to maintain the terror without the co-operation of their confederates in the villages. How many there are of these is not known. Maybe 2000, maybe more. But they are scattered everywhere, all of them have arms, join the gangs for short periods when needed, and keep them supplied with food and, above all, information about movements of the police and troops, about villagers who act or speak against the terrorism. They are the backbone of the gangs."

"What object have the villagers in helping the hillmen against their own people?"

"Some of them genuinely believe that this is a jihad (holy war), others have been intimidated, others, particularly the very young ones, are adventurers who are thrilled by the excitement of it, some are attracted by the rewards."

"And what are the rewards?"

"There is no rule. For some the possession of a gun and ammunition is enough reward. Others get part of the money from raids in which they help. And there are those who believe that the terrorists will win in the end, and then they will be given good jobs in the Wakf (religious endowments trust) by Haj Amin when he is brought back from exile."<sup>1</sup>

That there was some degree of organization of the troubles, and that the bands received funds and ammunition from Arab sources over the frontier, as well as from Palestine, seemed certain. It is, however, equally certain that the organization was rudimentary and the funds small. The courage of the bands was undeniable, for they had often seen their comrades killed, a dozen at a time, by British machine-gun fire and bombs, and had yet returned to the fight a day or two later. Moreover, the bands were obviously without the elementary equipment or training which would enable them to inflict serious casualties upon the British troops, or even upon armed Jewish colonies. The arms which were captured from them were almost invariably found to be part of the stocks abandoned in the Near East at the end of the First World War.

Throughout the early summer of 1938 the situation deteriorated. In June Jewish labourers were employed by the Government, at the cost of £100,000, to build a barbed-wire fence around the northern and north-eastern frontier of Palestine. This fence was intended to separate the Arabs of Palestine from the Arabs of the Lebanon and Syria, in order to hinder the importation of arms and the movements of insurgent bands. Whatever value

<sup>1</sup> *Palestine Review*, June 3, 1938.



its construction may have had as a police measure, it was certainly no contribution to a political settlement. A Christian Arab, one of the leaders of the so-called moderate party, when questioned on the subject by the present writer, expressed his feelings by quoting a passage from the Gospels. "When they had crucified Him," he said, "they parted His garments among them, casting lots ; and they sat and watched Him there."

Such was the bitterness caused in the heart of a moderate Arab by the policy of cutting Palestine off from the rest of Syria. It did not augur well for the proposed partition of Palestine itself.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE WHITE PAPER OF 1939

#### Partition Abandoned—The White Paper of 1939

As the summer of 1938 advanced, the rebellion in Palestine reached a new climax, far surpassing that of 1936. The building of the frontier fence was countered by redoubled activity on the part of the rebels. This in its turn was followed, during the month of July, by a series of frightful bomb explosions in the midst of crowds of Arab peasantry, men, women, and children, in the markets of Haifa, Jaffa, and Jerusalem. These outrages, which were universally held to be the work of Jews, still further aroused Arab feeling, and one of their results was a horrible massacre of several Jewish families during a rebel raid on the town of Tiberias. The morale of the Arab police was shaken by these events, and they could no longer be relied upon to oppose any effective resistance to their compatriots in outlying districts.

In these circumstances the rebels gradually forced the civil authorities out of many towns and country districts, destroying the police stations and Government offices in Hebron, Jericho, Beersheba, Bethlehem, and Ramallah. They also succeeded in imposing certain of their decrees upon the entire Arab population. In Jerusalem, for example, shopkeepers were instructed to close their shops on Friday, the Muslim day of prayer, and the order was obeyed. Townspeople throughout the country were ordered to give up the Turkish tarbush and to wear instead the Arab head-cloth and cord, and they did so. During September, when troops had to be withdrawn from Palestine on account of the European crisis, the rebels filtered into the old city of Jerusalem and forced the Government to admit that their authority no longer extended over the holy sites situated in the Mandatory capital itself.

In the first days of October, just after the danger of the immediate outbreak of a European war had been averted, the High Commissioner flew to London for consultation with the Colonial Secretary. Important decisions were taken at this meeting, and reinforcements were immediately dispatched to Palestine. The number of available troops was thus brought up to over 20,000.



Military commanders took charge of the various districts, with the civil authorities as political advisers, and the rebels, instead of being the attackers, became the attacked. The old city of Jerusalem was rapidly cleared: in the course of the operation there were only a few civilian and military casualties, the majority of the rebels departing as unobtrusively as they had come.

In the next two months the smaller towns were also reoccupied, and military posts established in them. Villages all over the country were subjected to surprise searches, and some scores of rifles captured. Engagements between troops and bands continued to occur fairly frequently. In the course of these operations the latter were very severely punished, many being killed; the troops also suffered a number of casualties.

By the beginning of December security in the towns was very much better than it had been during the summer. It appeared, indeed, probable that as long as troops were available in the existing numbers the rebellion could be maintained only at far greater cost to the rebels than formerly. Conditions were nevertheless in every way worse than they had been before the dissolution of the Arab Higher Committee in October 1937. The result of that action had been the destruction of all responsible political leadership in Arab Palestine. Incidentally, it had involved the complete eclipse of the National Defence Party, which had seceded from the Arab Higher Committee immediately before the publication of the Report of the Royal Commission. The leaders of this party had the reputation, in Zionist circles, of being more moderate than the majority of the Arab Higher Committee. In reality the principal difference was that the Defence Party, composed largely of men of wealth and their retainers, hoped to combat Zionism by utilizing against the Jews such concessions in the form of representative institutions as could be extracted from the Government. The majority, on the other hand, saw no hope of saving their national future except by refusing any co-operation with the Government until such time as it should have given a proof of its goodwill by making some substantial concession. This view they maintained even when it became clear that the result would be violence and the loss of life. In fact, in the course of the year which followed the dissolution of the Arab Higher Committee hundreds of lives, many of them Jewish, some English, but the overwhelming majority Arab, were lost. The railway service from Jerusalem to Lydda was suspended for months, while the line to Egypt ran only three times a week, and the main line from Haifa to Jaffa was subject to frequent



interruptions. Postal and other administrative services in the country districts ceased to function : great damage was caused to the telegraph- and telephone-lines. Many Arab men of position who were suspected of lukewarmness in the national cause, who were unwilling to contribute indefinitely to the rebel funds, or who were thought likely to set their personal advantage before that of their nation were assassinated, had their property destroyed, or found it advisable to flee the country. Others fled from the Government. A number of criminals took the opportunity to satisfy private grudges or to extort funds for their private purposes. The Government budget for all services other than 'defence' had to be greatly reduced. This reduction seriously affected the already inadequate allowance for Arab education, which the Royal Commission had said ought to be greatly increased. In short, expenditure during the year exceeded revenue by about £2,500,000 ; rather more than half this deficit was borne by the British Treasury. The casualties during the first ten months of 1938 totalled more than 1000 Arab, 200 Jewish, and 40 British killed, and over 1100 wounded. Meanwhile nothing whatever had been done to fulfil the undertaking implicit in the leaflets which were showered upon the villagers during 1936, when they were urged to entrust the investigation of their grievances to the Royal Commission. Land, for example, was still being purchased, often over the heads of the tenants.

It is true that immigration was no longer officially regulated by the so-called economic absorptive capacity of the country, but since the schedules which were issued appeared to be much the same as would have been given if the principle had been still applied, this change gave little or no satisfaction to the Arabs.

On the other hand, the Jewish unemployment which had resulted from the over-immigration of 1934-37 was greatly reduced by the construction of the Tel Aviv port, by the enrolment of thousands of Jewish supernumeraries, by the demands of the military for labour and for goods, by the use of Jewish workers to build the frontier fence, by the Arab transport and other strikes which led to a greatly increased demand for Jewish services, and in many other ways. It is, indeed, no exaggeration to say that only the disturbances saved the Jewish economy from a very serious crisis.

Meanwhile, however, events in Palestine had profoundly affected public opinion in England. The facts of the case became known directly, and no longer only through Zionist glasses. The proposal of the Royal Commission for the transfer of tens of



thousands of Arab peasantry to a less fertile portion of the country appeared conclusive proof that a further development of the National Home on a great scale was not possible except as the result of the wholesale eviction of the existing population. The subsequent investigations of the Government demonstrated that the possibilities of settlement in the Jordan valley, in the Beersheba district, and in Transjordan had been greatly exaggerated by the Royal Commission. Throughout the summer a number of British inquirers, many of them warm admirers of the Jewish people, visited Palestine in order to study the situation at first hand ; most of them returned to England with the conviction that Palestine could never be the solution of the Jewish problem. Many were deeply distressed by the inevitable accompaniments of a policy of repression, and shocked at the hardships inflicted upon innocent people, often women and children, by collective punishments, by constant curfews and fines, and by the destruction of houses.

In the Arab countries the reaction was naturally more violent. In Iraq and Egypt anti-Zionist feeling developed rapidly, and only energetic measures by the Governments concerned prevented outbreaks of mob violence against the Jews. In October a Congress of Members of Parliament from the Syrian, Iraqi, and Egyptian chambers met in Cairo. A deputation from this Congress was received by King Farouk, and later proceeded to London. Later a Congress of Arab women also met in Cairo for the purpose of protesting against Mandatory policy in Palestine.

It was therefore natural that the political, as well as the military, situation should be reviewed, in the light of the experience gained in the course of the previous three years, at the meeting of the High Commissioner with the Colonial Secretary in London at the beginning of October.

Immediately after this meeting the Iraqi Foreign Minister paid an official visit to London, where he had a number of meetings with the Foreign Secretary and other Ministers. At the same time the belief was widely held that the technical commission which had been sent to investigate the details of possible schemes for partition was about to report negatively. These two circumstances gave rise to a report that the Government had adopted the principle of the Arab proposal, supported by the Iraqi Minister, for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, bound to Great Britain by a treaty of alliance on the model of the Anglo-Iraqi treaty. This report caused great alarm in Zionist circles ; and urgent appeals were sent to the Jewish and Christian sup-



porters of Zionism in the United States of America begging them to bring pressure on the United States Government, in the hopes of thus forestalling any action unacceptable to Zionism on the part of the British Government.

At the end of October the issue of another six-monthly labour schedule removed the immediate anxieties of the Zionists, and produced corresponding despondency among the Arabs. It appeared, indeed, for the moment as if the Government were determined, after all, to continue to administer Palestine on the old basis for yet another indefinite period.

On November 9, however, a fresh statement concerning the future of Palestine was issued, accompanied by the publication of the Report of the Partition Commission. The Partition Scheme was declared to be impracticable, and therefore rejected. In order to arrive at an alternative solution, the Government announced its intention of initiating discussions in London with representatives of the Arabs and of the Jews. Only in the case of this conference failing to reach agreed conclusions would it then announce and carry out a policy of its own. A striking innovation was that the Government announced that it would invite the participation in the conference of representatives of the neighbouring Arab states, as well as of Palestine itself. As regards Palestinian representatives, the Government let it be understood that, while it would be unwilling to treat directly with the Mufti, it was prepared to do so with persons representing him.

Zionist circles received the proposal coldly. Those who had opposed partition, though glad that the scheme had been abandoned, were not pleased at the manner of its abandonment. For the Commission based its objections to partition upon arguments advanced by the Arabs, rather than upon those advanced by the Jews. It declared, moreover, that it would be more practicable to reduce the area of the Jewish state proposed by the Royal Commission than to enlarge it. For the pro-partition Jews the blow, though anticipated for months past, was severe. Their leader, Dr Weizmann, had long ago made it clear that in his opinion the only alternative to partition was the "crystallization" of the National Home. It was to avoid this that the Jewish Agency had adopted its intransigent attitude on the subject of immigration, thus sacrificing every opportunity of coming to an understanding with the Arabs and subjecting both the Jewish community and the whole country to the ordeal of three years' civil war.

To the Arabs the abandonment of partition appeared a very



belated recognition of the obvious, while their unfortunate experience during the previous twenty years made them profoundly suspicious of the Government's further intentions. Even the invitation to the neighbouring Arab states might, they feared, be merely a device to introduce Jewish immigrants into the rest of the Arab world, and so still further extend Zionist influence. By degrees, however, as the Government gave signs of a definite change of outlook, the Arab attitude became more favourable.

A great part in this process was played by a speech of the Colonial Secretary in the House of Commons on November 24, during the course of a debate on Palestine. It is true that Mr MacDonald on this occasion praised Zionist achievements in Palestine in language which the local Zionist Press itself described as "lyrical." At the same time, however, he made other statements which showed a marked approximation to the Arab point of view. He recognized, for example, that the majority of the rebels were actuated by patriotic motives, and went so far as to suggest that he himself, if he had been an Arab, would have felt as they did. He declared that Palestine, on account of its limited area, could not be the solution of the Jewish refugee question. He recognized explicitly that the Arabs had never been consulted at the time when the Balfour Declaration was issued.

A few days later it was announced that the Arab leaders who had been exiled to the Seychelles would be finally released, though not permitted for the present to return to Palestine. It was also made clear that the Mandatory Power would, if it thought necessary, propose changes in the text of the Mandate.

From these indications it was possible to draw certain inferences concerning the Mandatory's intentions.

The Government evidently thought that further development of the National Home by the methods hitherto adopted would render acute the problem which it had already created for the Jews of Iraq and Egypt, and, indeed, of non-Arab lands too, as, for example, Italy. In the latter country the doubt whether loyalty to a Zionist fatherland could be reconciled with loyalty to Italy had given rise to prolonged Press polemics, and prepared the way for subsequent Nazi-inspired anti-Semitic legislation. From this it followed that to pursue the present system further would be to violate the provision of the Balfour Declaration which was designed to safeguard the rights and political status of Jews in other countries. Even clearer was the fact that it would violently conflict with those provisions of the Mandate which direct that the rights and position of the other sections



of the population should not be prejudiced by Jewish immigration or by Jewish close settlement on the land. The positive injunction of the Mandate to establish the National Home had, in fact, been accomplished. It was time to concentrate on the provisions that this should not be done in such a way as to harm either Jews outside Palestine or other sections of the population within it.

It would therefore seem natural to replace Articles II, IV, and VI of the Mandate, which deal with the manner of establishing the National Home, by articles which would deal with the manner of its maintenance. The Government of Palestine would thus be free henceforth to regulate immigration and land sales according to the interests of the nation as now constituted, as a whole, and no longer according to the interests of one section only. The Jewish Agency, having fulfilled the purpose for which it was created, would naturally disappear. Internal Jewish affairs and the relations of the Jewish community with the Government would conveniently be handled by the Vaad Leumi, or National Council of Palestinian Jewry.

Once the Jewish section of the population was no longer in a privileged position, economically and politically, it would no doubt come to terms with the Arab majority. An epoch of co-operation might be hoped to ensue, which would result in Palestine taking its place as one of the autonomous Near Eastern states. In the circumstances of the time it would, of course, have been expected to stand in a special treaty relationship with the former Mandatory state. The latter would have guaranteed the security of the Holy Places and the maintenance of clearly defined rights of internal autonomy to the Jewish community. In case of necessity it would have had the right to ensure these by the use of its armed forces. It would, of course, also have expected to receive facilities for the defence of its own imperial interests.

The conference, which took the form of separate discussions between the British and the Arab, and the British and the Jewish, delegates, finally assembled early in 1939. It remained in session for more than a month. An Anglo-Arab committee, presided over by the Lord Chancellor, was appointed to consider the McMahon correspondence. At its conclusion the Lord Chancellor, while making it clear that he was acting as the advocate of the Government, and not in a judicial capacity, nevertheless stated that "the Arab point of view had been shown to have greater force" than had appeared hitherto. The same committee, moreover, reported unanimously that in 1918 His



Majesty's Government had not been free to dispose of Palestine "without regard for the wishes and interests of the inhabitants of Palestine."

For the first time attention was officially called to the Hogarth Message delivered to King Hussein in January 1918. The importance of this document lay in the fact that it was an official interpretation of the Balfour Declaration, delivered by the Government which issued the Declaration, within a few weeks of the date of its final drafting and publication. Its significant passages are worth repeating here :

So far as Palestine is concerned we are determined that no people shall be subject to another. . . .

(3) Since the Jewish opinion of the world is in favour of a return of Jews to Palestine, and inasmuch as this opinion must remain a constant factor, and, further, as His Majesty's Government view with favour the realization of this aspiration, His Majesty's Government are determined that in so far as is compatible with the freedom of the existing population, both economic and political, no obstacle should be put in the way of the realization of this ideal.

Having failed to reach an agreed settlement, the Government adopted a rather curious compromise. This was embodied in a Statement of Policy issued in May 1939.<sup>1</sup> The Statement began by reaffirming the principle, originally laid down in the Churchill White Paper of 1922, that the Government had at no time contemplated "the subordination of the Arabic population, language, or culture in Palestine." The Government now stated categorically that this meant that it was "not part of their policy that Palestine should become a Jewish state." Their ultimate objective was described as the establishment of an independent Palestine, a "state in which the two peoples in Palestine, Arabs and Jews, share authority in such a way that the eventual interests of each are secured."

With regard to immigration, the statement laid down that, subject to the economic absorptive capacity, 75,000 more Jewish immigrants should be admitted during the next five years—10,000 annually on a quota, classed as immigrants, and 25,000 in all as refugees. After these five years no more Jewish immigrants would be admitted "unless the Arabs of Palestine are prepared to acquiesce in it."

By these declarations the Government in effect declared that its efforts to establish a National Home for the Jewish people

<sup>1</sup> Command 6019.



in Palestine, as envisaged by the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate, could not as yet be considered to have been duly completed, but that they would be so considered at the end of another five years, provided that in that period 75,000 more Jews, or as many less as the economic absorptive capacity of the country necessitated, had been admitted.

With regard to land sales, it promised that in certain unspecified areas, to be defined at the discretion of the High Commissioner, sales of land by Arabs to Jews would henceforth be regulated, and in certain cases forbidden.

The Government thereby with slight modifications maintained for the time being the former interpretation and validity of Articles II and VI of the Mandate, but anticipated their transformation at the end of a period of five years. The same inference could be drawn in the case of Article IV, which dealt with the position of the Jewish Agency. For while nothing was said as to the immediate abolition of this body, yet no provision was made for consultation with it when, in five years' time, the question of the future constitution of Palestine would come up for discussion among the parties concerned.

The Arab reaction was only partially favourable. The provisions concerning land sales were, from their point of view, quite inadequate. For they were based exclusively upon the possible dispossession of cultivators, as assessed by the High Commissioner. They ignored the fact that the rights and position of the Arab population were also being prejudiced by land purchases made by Jews avowedly for "political and strategical reasons"—i.e., with a view to dominating the whole country.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless the definite statement that there was no intention of setting up a Jewish state and the apparent determination to make Palestine an independent country in which the Jews formed not more than a third of the total population were very welcome to the Arabs. If there had been any substantial guarantee that Jewish immigration would, in fact, be limited to 15,000 a year,

<sup>1</sup> "During 5699 [September 1938–September 1939] the Keren Kayemeth purchased land in practically all parts of Eretz Israel [Palestine]. But in former times the economic aspect dominated in the land-buying policy of the Fund. The emphasis has now shifted to the political and strategical importance of areas required. Purchases were aimed largely at strengthening our frontier positions in Upper Galilee, on the Syrian frontier, in the Beisan area, and along the sea coast."—C. Z. Kloetzel, in *The Zionist Review* of September 13, 1939. Cf. *Report of the Executives of the Zionist Organization and of the Jewish Agency for Palestine submitted to the Twenty-first Zionist Congress* (Jerusalem, 1939), pp. 187–188.



and that Jewish opposition would not be allowed to block indefinitely the establishment of a Palestinian state, at the end of the period of ten years suggested in the White Paper, the Arab leaders would no doubt have accepted the 75,000 further immigrants for the sake of the future settlement. It was, indeed, stated in the White Paper that

His Majesty's Government are determined to check illegal immigration, and further preventive measures are being adopted. The numbers of any Jewish illegal immigrants who, despite these measures, may succeed in coming into the country and cannot be deported will be deducted from the yearly quotas.

But similar statements at intervals during the last twenty years had never yet been followed by a cessation of the illegal immigration, and the Arab delegates saw no reason to suppose that they would be on this occasion either, unless some substantial guarantee, constitutional or otherwise, accompanied them.

Unfortunately the White Paper of 1939 was vaguer on the constitutional question even than the White Paper of 1922 or the Legislative Council proposals of 1935-36. For, whereas both these had foreseen the speedy establishment of a Legislative Council, the 1939 White Paper stated only that

His Majesty's Government make no proposals at this stage regarding the establishment of an elective legislature. Nevertheless they would regard this as an appropriate constitutional development, and, should public opinion in Palestine hereafter show itself in favour of such a development, they will be prepared, provided that local conditions permit, to establish the necessary machinery.

This multiplication of precautions, including "should public opinion in Palestine hereafter show itself in favour of such a development" and "provided that local conditions permit," taken together with "adequate provision for the special position in Palestine of the Jewish National Home," mentioned in another paragraph, seemed to the Arabs to suggest that Jewish opposition would still be allowed to block constitutional development indefinitely.

For these reasons the Arab delegation felt themselves compelled to reject the proposals. A certain limited recrudescence of Arab violence even manifested itself in Palestine. Arab opinion had nevertheless been greatly impressed. The Arabs felt that they had received an instalment of justice, and they



longed for an end of the bloodshed and suffering. Little by little the Government was able to relax many of its repressive measures and to release large numbers of prisoners from the thirteen concentration camps.

The reaction on the Jewish side was violent. Since the publication of the Report of the Royal Commission official Zionist opinion had moved a long way towards open adherence to the Revisionist faith that the aim of Zionism was the establishment of a Jewish state, in all Palestine and Transjordan, supported by a Jewish army. It was, therefore, a severe shock to the Zionist masses when they were summoned by the Government to return to the pre-Royal Commission faith of Zionism. This, it will be remembered, had been reiterated by the Zionist Congress of 1911 in the following words: "Only those suffering from gross ignorance, or actuated by malice, could accuse us of the desire of establishing an independent Jewish kingdom." It had been reaffirmed by Mr Sokolov, President of the Zionist Organization in 1918-19, a year or so after the giving of the Balfour Declaration. "The Jewish state," he said, "was never a part of the Zionist programme." "The determination of the Jewish people," said a resolution of the Zionist Congress of 1921, "is to live with the Arab people on terms of concord and mutual respect, and together with them to make the common home into a flourishing community." One might envisage from these declarations an association like that of the French Canadians with the Anglo-Saxon majority in Canada, or of the Scots and the Welsh with the English, or of the Italian-, French-, and German-speaking Swiss. On the strength of such declarations some Arab leaders at least had welcomed Dr Weizmann when he first visited Egypt in 1919. After the mass immigration of 1934-36 and the Report of the Royal Commission Zionist aspirations were no longer so modest. Had not the Royal Commission declared that the "primary objective of Zionism" was that some Jews at least should cease living a "minority life"?

The general lines of the Government's proposals became known before their official publication. It thus came about that the actual broadcasting of them on May 17, 1939, was delayed by Jewish sabotage, the connexion with the studio having been cut at the precise moment when the broadcast was timed to begin. Later, in the same night, bombs were exploded in the Department of Migration in Jerusalem, and the Government offices in Tel Aviv were assaulted and sacked.

On the next day the Grand Rabbi tore up a copy of the White



Paper before the assembled congregation in the principal synagogue of Jerusalem. Street demonstrations in the same city resulted in the death of a British constable from a Jewish revolver-shot. Mass meetings of Jews throughout the country took an oath to observe a proclamation which contained the following passages :

Whereas the British Government has announced a new policy in Palestine. . . .

Now therefore the Jewish population proclaims before the world that this treacherous policy will not be tolerated. The Jewish population will fight it to the uttermost, and will spare no sacrifice to frustrate and defeat it.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time it was proclaimed that the Jewish population of Palestine would inaugurate a policy of civil disobedience and non-co-operation with the Government. It soon appeared, however, that the mooted project was merely intended to provide a temporary outlet for the heated feelings of the masses. For such a policy would have at once created chaos in the Jewish community. Jewish leaders knew that if the Government were to cease its active support of the National Home the latter's entire structure would be imperilled. Faced with civil disobedience, the Government would be forced to exercise its right under Article IV of the Mandate and refuse any longer to recognize the Zionist Organization as an appropriate Jewish Agency "for the purpose of advising and co-operating with the Administration of Palestine." It would then be revealed that the National Home was after all a portion of the general structure of the country's economy, and not an entirely self-contained autarkic organism, independent of the Mandatory Government. By refusing contracts to the Histadrut contracting agency, by withholding subsidies from Jewish municipal and educational bodies, by filling with Arabs the posts vacated by Jewish Government employees, by closing if necessary the economically redundant Tel Aviv port, by substituting British police or military for the thousands of Jewish supernumeraries, the Government could immediately bring such economic pressure to bear as would force the Jewish community to realize its absolute dependence upon the aid which the Administration gives it.

The talk of non-co-operation therefore soon ceased. Instead steps were taken to strengthen the National Home as much as possible in the immediate future. This was designed to render

<sup>1</sup> Text in *The Palestine Post* of May 19, 1939.



the implementation of the White Paper, at the end of the five or ten years, more difficult. Meanwhile war might break out or a different Government come into power in England, and the position be in consequence radically changed.

Co-operation with the Administration was therefore maintained as far as the latter permitted.<sup>1</sup> Steps were taken to stir American feeling by denunciation of the alleged betrayal of the Jews by Britain, and so to stimulate the raising of large additional sums for the purchase of land and other Zionist objectives. Advantage was taken of the poverty of the fellahin, subsequent to the rising, and of the greed of absentee, often non-Palestinian landlords to buy as much land as possible for "political and strategical" purposes. Illegal immigration was organized on a large scale, and immigrants, including women and children, were brought to the shores of Palestine, in boats, without documents, in the belief that the Administration would be forced by humanitarian considerations to allow them to enter the country.

From May until September this policy was put into effect with considerable success. It was endangered chiefly by the fact that the Zionist leaders, having for years incited their followers against the Government by unmeasured language, were unable in this crisis altogether to control them. Many Arabs and some English were killed by Jewish shots and bombs, while a number of Arab villages were raided and many of their inmates killed. This violence occurred on such a scale that it became difficult to throw the blame entirely upon that usual convenient scapegoat, the Revisionists.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, anti-Jewish feeling began to develop among Britishers as well as among Arabs.

This, however, did little to mar the general success of the policy.

"With the transfer of some 50,000 dunams in 5699 [September 1938–September 1939]," wrote a Zionist journalist,

the Keren Kayemeth has surpassed last year's record of 35,000 dunams by almost 50 per cent. . . . During the several weeks immediately preceding and following the publication of the White

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<sup>1</sup> The Mandatory could hardly be expected to ignore the fact that the Chairman of the Zionist Executive was reported to have made the following declaration to the Zionist Congress held in August: "For us the White Paper neither exists nor can exist. We must behave as if we were the State in Palestine until we actually become the State in Palestine."—D. Ben Gurion, in the *Judische Welt Rundschau* of August 25, 1939.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 146.



Paper 16,000 dunams were redeemed, more than during the whole of 5697.<sup>1</sup>

The immigration policy was also successful. Jewish arrivals from September 1938 to September 1939 numbered not the mere ten or fifteen thousand of the Government quotas, but no fewer than thirty-five thousand.<sup>2</sup>

In view of the illegal immigration the Government did, indeed, issue no quota for the six months beginning October 1939, but even so the flow of illegal immigrants greatly exceeded the numbers that could have come in under the quota. Many were not detected by the Government, while those who were detected were "invariably turned over to the Agency for arrangements regarding their absorption."<sup>3</sup>

The annual proceedings of the Permanent Mandates Commission were chiefly remarkable for the patience with which the Colonial Secretary, Mr Malcolm MacDonald, wrestled with those members of the Commission who, not unnaturally, were reluctant to approve an interpretation of the Mandate which conflicted with that which they had hitherto maintained. The Government proposals were, however, in due course referred to the Council of the League, accompanied by a resolution of the Permanent Mandates Commission, passed by four votes to three, to the effect that they appeared to be inconsistent with the text of the Mandate.

Such was the position at the outbreak of war in 1939.

<sup>1</sup> *The Zionist Review*, September 13, 1939, p. 6. The following example shows the process at work. On March 15, 1939, it was announced that Jewish agencies had acquired a stretch of land to the north of Lake Huleh; the sellers were absentee, non-Palestinian landlords, a Lebanese family called Fransis. The land included two Arab villages, Dafna and Khan Duweir, containing, in 1931, 319 and 137 Arab inhabitants. In May two Jewish settlements were established on this land. In the *Judische Welt Rundschau* of May 19, 1939, an article on these settlements contained the following passage: "We are here on a part of the newly won land of the Jewish National Fund [on which none but Jews may work]. It has not yet been possible to occupy other portions of the land because the Arab tenants have not yet vacated the soil. On this spot success has been achieved in coming to an agreement; they will, some thirty families, be settled in Transjordan—or the Hauran—on equally good soil, and they have received financial support from the Jewish National Fund." The process is quite clear. The land was bought over the cultivators' heads from a non-Palestinian landlord. It was difficult to dispose of the Arab cultivators. In the course of time they were led by various means, including "financial support from the Jewish National Fund," to abandon their houses and their country, and to proceed (after, it must be supposed, securing the necessary passports and visas) to Transjordan or the Hauran, where (it is hoped, at any rate) they will "be settled" on "equally good" non-Palestinian soil.

<sup>2</sup> Mr M. Shertok, head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, in *The Jewish Chronicle*, November 3, 1939. Cf. *The New Judæa* (October, 1939), p. 3.



## CHAPTER XV

### THE SECOND WORLD WAR

No fighting took place in Palestine during the War of 1939-45. In these circumstances political development continued in the same general sense as before ; in some respects it was intensified and accelerated. On the one hand, official Zionism openly declared that the aim of the movement was a Jewish (or rather Hebrew) state or commonwealth.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the Arabs came to regard the White Paper of 1939 as a right acquired not only by the Palestinians, but by the Arab world in general, of which Palestine was a small but essential part. It was, moreover, claimed that though Palestine's status as an independent state had not been formally manifested, this should not debar the country from taking part in the counsels of those Arab states whose independence was internationally recognized.<sup>2</sup> Other significant developments were the disaster which befell Jewry in Nazi-controlled Europe, the eclipse of French influence in the Arab East, the extension of American interests, and the revival of those of Russia. In general, it became increasingly clear throughout the period that the problem of Palestine could no longer be handled as an issue confined to the limits of the Mandated territory, but must be considered in the framework of the Arab East as a whole. For this reason it is necessary here to devote considerable space to developments outside as well as within Palestine.

The outbreak of war found the Palestinian Arabs exhausted after the prolonged struggle with the Mandatory Power, and by no means indifferent to the inducements held out by the White Paper. Apart from the political disagreement, they had been in friendly association with the British for twenty years, and, even in the political field itself, they were well aware that Britain alone of the Great Powers had, at any rate to some extent, assisted Arab political development. They were therefore inclined to sympathize with the democratic rather than the Fascist Powers, in spite of the propaganda in which the latter indulged. From

<sup>1</sup> Congress at Biltmore Hotel, New York, May 1942.

<sup>2</sup> Protocol and Constitution of the League of Arab States, October 1944 and March 1945.



the beginning of the War the Palestinian Arabs abstained from any action which might hinder the war effort, and contributed quite substantially to military and labour forces recruited locally. This co-operative attitude was strengthened by the fact that the Government made very real efforts to enforce the immigration laws, and in the spring of 1940 introduced regulations to implement the sections of the White Paper dealing with land sales. These divided the country into three zones : in the plains, where Jewish settlement was already dense, land sales remained uncontrolled ; in an intermediate zone transfer of land from Palestinian Arabs to Jews could be made only with the assent of the Government, though it could be transferred from non-Palestinian Arabs ; in the hill district transfers of land from Palestinian Arabs were completely forbidden, and transfer from non-Palestinian Arabs was permitted only by special order of the High Commissioner. While the High Commissioner was still left discretion to modify any or all of these restrictions in the interests of Jewish settlement, and while it is arguable that the concentration of Jewish land purchases in certain areas was intended to prepare the way for partition, or at least cantonization, of the country, the regulations undoubtedly gave protection to the hill Arabs, and went far to pacify Arab public opinion. In these happier circumstances the detainees and exiles were for the most part gradually released. By the spring of 1945 the one outstanding exception (apart from the Mufti) was the former member of the Arab Higher Committee, Jamal Husseini, who, however, had escaped from Palestine at the time of the arrest of other members of the Committee, and had been taken into custody only later in connexion with the abortive Iraqi rising in 1941.

Of the independent Arab countries King Abdul Aziz, of Saudi Arabia, while remaining neutral, put his great moral influence unreservedly on the side of Great Britain throughout the War : at all important moments he counselled moderation to his fellow-Arabs and urged them to co-operate with Great Britain. In Egypt and Iraq influential groups (headed in the latter country by General Nuri Said) favoured a declaration of war against the Axis and the dispatch of a fighting force, however small, to the appropriate front. They were no doubt influenced in this by the feeling that dignity demanded that their countries should take a stand on the great issues dividing the world ; they probably considered also that active participation in the struggle would provide a rallying-point for the national activities, and at the same time be the best means of winning support for Arab



aspirations when the War was over. The entry of these two countries into the War was not, however, encouraged by the British Government. The attitude of the latter was probably decided primarily by military considerations: the fighting strength which Egypt and Iraq could contribute would be inconsiderable, while the equipment and training which they would require would be more profitably applied to British or Empire troops. Moreover, the enemy, as long as they had hopes of winning these states to their side, might well be less disposed to bomb Egyptian and Iraqi centres, which were of importance for the war effort. The two countries, therefore, with the full approval of the British Government, contented themselves with placing their resources at their ally's disposal in the manner laid down in the Anglo-Egyptian and the Anglo-Iraqi treaties. In Egypt this state of affairs continued until the end of the War, with results which on the whole could be considered satisfactory. The policy appeared to have the support of public opinion, and in the crisis of El Alamein the Egyptian public behaved with admirable calm: not only was there no sabotage, but on the contrary a very helpful co-operation.

In Iraq things turned out less well. The country had received very little attention from Britain after the recognition of its independence, and had become the centre of extreme Arab nationalism. In particular many Army officers became disaffected, partly from an unfortunate tradition of Army interference in civil affairs and partly from a suspicion that the Army had been deliberately starved of equipment by their British allies. In these circumstances many active and ambitious young men, dissatisfied with conditions in Syria, Palestine, or the Lebanon, settled in Iraq as teachers and in other capacities. Here they were later joined by Haj Amin el Husseini, who escaped from the Lebanon. This was the background of the Iraq rising in 1941, which might have had catastrophic results; fortunately the heavy losses suffered by the Luftwaffe in the battle of Crete prevented the Germans from giving effectual aid to the insurgents, while the tribesmen, who formed a high percentage of the rank and file of the infantry, were completely apathetic and deserted by hundreds. After the suppression of the rising the British Government magnanimously restored the legitimate régime, without reprisals, and henceforth gave that support and encouragement to the friendly elements which had previously been lacking. From that time on the Iraq Government co-operated to the fullest extent, declaring war on the Axis Powers from January



16, 1943. Rashid Ali, the Prime Minister, who headed the rising, together with Haj Amin and other leaders, found his way to Germany, whence the two principal leaders indulged in radio propaganda against Britain.

Syria and Lebanon, Palestine's neighbours to the north, had, after the fall of France, been controlled by the Vichy Government; in the spring of 1941 they were liberated by British forces with some Free French assistance. Before the entry of the Allied forces a proclamation, issued by General Catroux on behalf of the Free French movement, promised both countries immediate and complete independence; this promise was endorsed by the British Government. It was not, however, till over two years later that free elections were held, resulting in the establishment of fully representative Governments in both countries. In the Lebanon the Government which was formed, while showing itself determined to insist on the integrity and independence of the country within its existing frontiers, at the same time made clear its intention of co-operating closely with Syria and with the Arab world in general. This policy was unacceptable to the French authorities, who in November 1943 arrested the President of the Republic and the entire Cabinet. Under British pressure, however, these were subsequently released, and it appeared that a happier period of Franco-Lebanese relations was beginning. Soon, however, a further dispute arose over the settlement which was to regulate the mutual relations of France and the Levant states now that the Mandate had in practice ceased to be operative. The French pressed for a treaty similar to the Anglo-Egyptian and the Anglo-Iraqi treaties. The Levant states, who before the War would have welcomed such a settlement, now, in the light of their experience, refused to grant France any privileged position, fearing that this would be used to maintain control of their affairs. Tension on this occasion was greatest in Syria, and the landing of a small number of French reinforcements in the Levant led to Franco-Syrian clashes in various parts of the country. In an effort to assert their position the French resorted to drastic action, including the firing of some shells on Damascus. The British Government thereupon took over control and supervised the withdrawal of French troops from Syria. By these means order was restored, though the position remained uneasy, and it was evident that much time must elapse before Franco-Syrian and Franco-Lebanese relations were stabilized. Meanwhile Syria and the Lebanon had been recognized as members of the United



Nations, and had been admitted to the San Francisco Conference.

While these developments were occurring in the individual Arab countries, no less significant changes were taking place in their relations with one another. Already by 1939 the movement for Arab unity had made great progress. The War accelerated this in many ways. Almost first among these might be put the development of broadcasting in Arabic, both by local stations and by the Great Powers. This spread far and wide the knowledge of modern journalistic Arabic, which, as opposed to the local spoken dialects, is the *lingua franca* of the Arab world, and so in itself a potent instrument of unification. Broadcasting also made known the events and the personalities of the various Arab countries to one another, in a way which had never previously occurred. First Italy, then Britain and Germany, directed powerful transmitters to the Arab world for propaganda aims, and set out to rival one another in appealing to Arab sentiment. Other Powers followed suit on a lesser scale, so that Arabic transmissions of one kind or another were inaugurated from Turkey, France, the United States of America, the U.S.S.R., Spain, China, and Japan, as well as from Britain, Italy, and Germany. All this gave the Arab world a new unity of ideas and ideals. In the material field the building and extension for war purposes of ports, aerodromes, railways, and roads brought the whole area into far closer connexion. In 1941 there was founded the Middle East Supply Centre, an originally British but subsequently Anglo-American organization, which had the duty of regulating imports into the Middle East in the interests of economy in shipping. This body later developed the function of making the area as far as possible a self-supporting economic unit.

In the political field the event of prime importance was a declaration made by Mr Eden in 1941. This said :

This country has a long tradition of friendship with the Arabs. We have countless well-wishers among them, as they have many friends here. Some days ago I said that His Majesty's Government had great sympathy with Syrian aspirations for independence, but I would go further. Many Arab thinkers desire for the Arab peoples a greater degree of unity than they now enjoy. In reaching out towards this unity they hope for our support. No such appeal from our friends should go unanswered. It seems to me both natural and right that the cultural and economic ties between the Arab countries, and the political ties too, should be strengthened. His Majesty's Government will give their full support to any scheme that commands general approval.



These various developments had an effect which can hardly be overrated upon the ever-increasing number of the younger generation who had been trained in Western methods. A public opinion was created so strongly in favour of closer relations between the various Arab states that it led Arab leaders to rival one another in trying to overcome the difficulties created by dynastic, religious, and racial problems and by local particularism. At one time the project of a united Greater Syria, including the present states of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Transjordan—a bloc which might later come into close relationship with Iraq—seemed to hold the field. This scheme, however, encountered various difficulties. Firstly, the Lebanon, with its population nearly half Christian and its high standards of education, was not anxious to enter into a federated system which might prejudice the autonomy which it had possessed already in Ottoman times. Secondly, the position of the Emir of Transjordan raised difficulties, in view of the preference of some areas for republican government and of the rivalry between the Hashimite family and King Abdul Aziz, of Saudi Arabia. Thirdly, there was a suspicion in some Arab minds that among the British supporters of the scheme there were many who were more influenced by the desire to find possibilities for Zionist expansion than by goodwill towards the Arabs.

After prolonged negotiations the decision was finally reached to create, in the first place, a League of Arab States. This, like the British Commonwealth of Nations, would be based on a common language, culture, traditions, and interests, rather than on a rigid political organization. Each state would retain its sovereignty, while a council meeting in March and October each year would deal with questions of foreign policy, education, and economics affecting more than one state; the Council would, moreover, advise on any differences which might arise between state members. The original signatories were six independent Arab states—Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the Lebanon, and Transjordan—the Yemen signing later. Of two annexes one provided for assistance to be given by all political means to further the aspirations of non-independent Arab states, thus envisaging the progressive emancipation of the Arab territories in North Africa; the other dealt with Palestine, which was represented at the discussions by a delegate who, however, in view of the ambiguous status of the country, did not sign the Covenant. This annexe declared that Palestine, having been detached from the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World



War, had become an autonomous body without becoming the dependency of any other state. There was therefore no reason why it should not participate in the work of the Council of the League, even though, for reasons beyond its control, its international existence as an independent state had not been formally manifested. The Council would therefore designate an Arab representative for Palestine to participate in its work.

The signing of this agreement was undoubtedly a very great political success for the Arabs. The states concerned had constituted in the Middle Ages the central portion of the Arab Caliphate; their reintegration into a political unit held out a dazzling prospect for the revival of an area which was the home of several of the great civilizations of the ancient world and led the world in learning in the Middle Ages. The bloc comprises some 32,000,000 people, with a potential further 16,000,000 in North Africa. Moreover, the nature of the League gave promise of allowing a diversity within the unity which should give scope to the talents of all those racial and religious communities who in less happy times were at feud with one another, and so became the willing or unwilling instruments of foreign interference. An immense task remained to be done in eradicating the poverty, ignorance, and other deep-seated evils of the Middle East, but it could be said that a suitable political framework had been provided with a success that the most optimistic could hardly have dared hope for in the immediate past.

Having thus considered the development of Arab affairs during the war years, let us turn to that of the Jews.

In the War of 1914-18 the Zionist Organization, then a relatively small affair, but possessing branches in all the principal combatant countries, proclaimed its neutrality as to the issues at stake, and Zionist as well as other Jews played their part with distinction and loyalty as citizens of the nations to which they belonged, whether on the side of the Central Powers or that of the Allies, both before and after the issue of the Balfour Declaration. In the war which broke out in 1939 the circumstances were different. The savage German anti-Semitism was shared to a lesser or greater extent by all Germany's allies. On August 29, 1939, therefore, Dr Weizmann addressed the following letter to the British Prime Minister:

DEAR MR PRIME MINISTER,

In this hour of supreme crisis the consciousness that the Jews have a contribution to make to the defence of sacred values compels me to write this letter. I wish to confirm, in the most explicit



manner, the declarations which I and my colleagues have made during the last months, and especially in the last week: that the Jews "stand by Great Britain and will fight on the side of the democracies."

Our urgent desire is to give effect to these declarations. We wish to do so in a way entirely consonant with the general scheme of British action, and therefore would place ourselves, in matters big and small, under the co-ordinating direction of His Majesty's Government. The Jewish Agency is ready to enter into immediate arrangements for utilizing man-power, technical ability, resources, etc.

The Jewish Agency has recently had differences in the political field with the Mandatory Power. We would like these differences to give way before the greater and more pressing necessities of the times.<sup>1</sup>

It is not quite clear from this letter whether Dr Weizmann was claiming to speak for the Jews of Palestine only, or for Zionist Jews throughout the world, or for Jewry in general. If he was speaking for the former only it might have been anticipated that they would in any case act "under the co-ordinating direction of His Majesty's Government," while in the latter two cases it would seem that he was making a rather large assumption in offering to place Jewish subjects of Allied and neutral countries under the co-ordination and direction of the British Government. More significant than these ambiguities, however, was the interpretation put upon the final paragraph. This did not mean that the Jewish Agency were prepared to accept the *status quo* and abstain from agitation against the policy of the Mandatory Power for the duration of the War. On the contrary, it was hoped by them that the Government would break the pledges made in the White Paper and postpone any attempt to implement its provisions. The Government, however, though it did not attempt during the War to carry out the constitutional provisions of the White Paper, held firm in the matter of immigration and land sales. The regulations issued on the latter subject have already been mentioned: they left the Zionists adequate scope for land purchases for many years, though only in certain areas. Immigration too was still permitted, but the subject gave rise to much greater difficulties. As we have seen, the breakdown of government in Palestine in the past was to be attributed above all to failure to enforce the immigration laws. A solemn affirmation had now been made to the Arabs of determination to do so

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in A. Ruppin, *The Jewish Fate and Future* (Macmillan, 1940), p. 369.



in the future ; if trust in British good faith was to be maintained it was more than ever essential to repress organized infringements. In the circumstances questions of immigration could not be treated purely from the humanitarian point of view. While the Government made every concession possible, in the case, for example, of Polish Jewish refugee children who were evacuated from the U.S.S.R. to Palestine, they took strong measures against organized illegality.

The best known two cases were those connected with the names of the steamers *Patria* and *Struma*. The passengers of these ships were Jews from Eastern Europe, the majority of whom had, no doubt, no desire beyond that of reaching a safe refuge. Those responsible for organizing their transport to Palestine, however, among whom Christian speculators are said to have been included, must have been fully aware of what they were doing. They were, in fact, consciously or unconsciously abetting a policy of endeavouring to defeat the Government's regulations in a matter which might have had disastrous results in the Arab Middle East, and so upon the war effort in general. A body of such refugees, unprovided with immigration certificates, arrived at Haifa harbour in the autumn of 1940. Permission to land was refused, not because certificates could not have been made available under the terms of the White Paper, but because of political considerations and the danger of enemy agents being included among the passengers. The latter were therefore put aboard a Messageries Maritimes liner, the *Patria*, as a preliminary to being transferred elsewhere. The ship was thereupon blown up and sunk in the harbour by the action of some of the passengers or their sympathizers on shore. Considerable loss of life was thus caused, and a valuable ship put out of action at a most critical moment in the German submarine campaign. The survivors were allowed to remain in the country, but subsequent illegal immigrants were deported to Mauritius, where, with some exceptions, they remained till the spring of 1945, when permission was granted for them to enter Palestine. The *Struma*, a wretched vessel overcrowded with refugees, set out from Constanza in February 1942, but was not allowed by the Turkish Government to proceed beyond Istanbul, as the passengers were known to be without visas. While negotiations were proceeding concerning the possible admission to Palestine of the women and children on board, the boat was turned back, and subsequently sank in the Black Sea in a storm, or because it struck a mine, with virtually no survivors. In view of Jewish



misery in Nazi-occupied Europe both these episodes were distressing in the extreme. The circumstances, undoubtedly tragic, were utilized to attack the policy of the British Government, which was faced with a bitter propaganda campaign in Britain, the United States of America, and elsewhere.

Another political issue of importance was the effort of the Jewish Agency to induce the British Government to sanction the formation of a specifically Jewish, as opposed to Palestinian, fighting force or army. The desire of Jews to engage as combatants against the Nazis was natural and wholly creditable, and, in fact, in all the Allied forces Jews were playing their part with distinction, side by side with their compatriots of Christian and other faiths. If there had existed a Palestinian Army it would also have been natural that there should have been distinctive Jewish and Arab units. In the absence of any such force the Government invited Palestinians to serve in special companies of British regiments. Later a Palestinian regiment was formed which contained both Jewish and Arab battalions. These were originally designed for pioneer duties only, but were, in fact, involved in fighting during the disasters in France and in Greece, where a number were taken prisoner in the course of the retreats. Recruitment, as far as the Mandatory Government was concerned, was on a voluntary basis, and about 23,000 Jews and 9000 Arabs joined up in various branches of the services. The percentage of rejections, however, of Arab volunteers on medical grounds was apparently much higher than in the case of Jewish volunteers. Moreover, the Jewish Agency used their "sub-governmental" powers so freely to induce Jews to join the forces that the Palestine Administration felt compelled to intervene in favour of the maintenance of the voluntary principle. The willingness of individual members of the two communities to volunteer for military service with the British Army is, therefore, not altogether accurately represented by these figures.

Towards the end of the War, in the autumn of 1944, the Government authorized the formation of a specifically Jewish Brigade Group for combatant service. This was to be composed primarily of Palestinian Jews, and recruiting was to be organized through the Jewish Agency. The force first went into action on the Italian front in March 1945. The Jewish community in Palestine also made a valuable contribution to the war effort through their industrial establishments and technicians. There was thus during the War considerable industrial as well as agricultural progress in Palestine; this brought full employment



for all and a great augmentation of the Government revenues. On the other hand, the cost of living rose greatly, and in general Palestine shared to the full in the conditions produced by war in other countries.

In the field of Zionist policy the most important event during the War years was the declaration of aims agreed at the Zionist conference held at the Biltmore Hotel, New York, in May 1942. The declaration represented a triumph for the outspoken policy of Mr Ben Gurion, Chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive in Palestine, over the more cautious attitude of Dr Weizmann, President of the World Zionist Organization. As we have seen, the driving-force of the Zionist movement from the very beginning had been the determination to found a Jewish state or commonwealth in the whole of Western Palestine, with which it was hoped to incorporate sooner or later Transjordan and South Lebanon. There had, however, always been two schools of thought as to the means most adapted to secure this aim. One, expounded during the entire Mandatory period by Mr Jabotinsky and the New Zionist Organization, held that the only hope was to state the demand openly and fully, and demonstrate to the world the advantages of the scheme as a final solution of the problem of anti-Semitism, the Jewish state being capable of absorbing all Jews unable or unwilling to remain in the countries where they had been established. The other, which until the report of the Royal Commission was the solemnly proclaimed view of the officially recognized Zionist Organization, under the leadership of Dr Weizmann, held that Zionist efforts should be concentrated for the time being on practical work—that is, on furthering immigration and purchasing land—until Jewish settlement had developed to such an extent that the establishment of a Jewish commonwealth or state would come about, as it were, automatically. Meanwhile the ultimate objective should not be mentioned, or, indeed, should be disavowed. The latter policy had obvious drawbacks. Though the Arabs never took Zionist disavowals seriously, British officials and the British public did, and the “reassuring statements” issued to the Arabs (such as the Hogarth Message to the Sherif of Mecca or the 1922 White Paper) were from the Zionist point of view awkward documents to have on record. Moreover, the success of the scheme depended not only on a steady growth of Jewish settlement, but on the weakening of Arab opposition. Far from this happening, the Arabs, both in Palestine and the neighbouring independent states, increased in numbers, in education, and in determination,



while the sentiment of Arab unity became stronger from day to day. Thus, when after the great immigration of 1933-35 Mr Ben Gurion had permitted himself to indulge openly in the vision of a greater Land of Israel, whose ships would sail upon the Eastern and the Western seas, there had followed the Arab rising of 1936, which it was impossible to dismiss as a passing explosion of ill-feeling stirred up by professional agitators.

The final blow to the Weizmann policy was, however, given by the Report of the Royal Commission. This declared that the further continuance of the Mandate, as administered in the past, had become impracticable, and made instead the suggestion that Palestine should be divided into a Jewish state in one part of the country, with a Mandated area and an Arab state in the remainder. This project was not in the end adopted, because, while the Arabs rejected it absolutely and the Zionists were prepared to consider it only as a step towards establishing a Jewish state in the whole of Palestine, it was declared by the Partition Commission to be impracticable on technical grounds. Nevertheless the official blessing thus given to the slogan of a Jewish state as a legitimate objective of Zionism made it respectable in Zionist circles, which had hitherto fought shy of using it. To many the slow and cautious policy of Dr Weizmann seemed to be leading nowhere, and there was a distinct move towards the policy advocated by the New Zionist Organization. This situation enabled Mr Ben Gurion to impose his view on the Zionist conference in New York in the spring of 1942, and to carry a declaration which demanded that Jewish immigration into Palestine should be permitted without limit, under the control of the Jewish Agency, which should be given authority to develop the country, and that Palestine should be established as a Jewish commonwealth. Though this policy was endorsed by the committee of the Zionist General Council in Jerusalem in November 1942, it encountered considerable opposition from the influential organization of those immigrants who had arrived in recent years as refugees from the Hitler persecution (the Aliyah Hadasha), as well as from the Left Wing Socialists (Hashomer Hatsair) and from the Ihud ('group') headed by Dr Magnes, all of whom considered the objective of a bi-national state to be a more suitable political programme.

Meanwhile the agitation against the White Paper and violent propaganda against the British Government were carried on both in Palestine and abroad. The effect of this agitation on less responsible elements of the Jewish population led to the formation of terrorist organizations, while in August and



September 1943 a sensational arms-smuggling trial indicated the existence of a vast and wealthy organization engaged in the systematic theft of arms and ammunition from the British Army. There was at least a strong suspicion that much of these arms passed to the illegal defence organization (the Haganah) known to be maintained by the Jewish Agency. The specifically terrorist organizations first amassed funds by blackmail and violence against members of the Jewish community; then, later on, police barracks and Government offices were attacked and destroyed by explosives, and British and other officials attacked. One of these organizations, the Irgun Zwei Leumi (National Military Organization), was originally the para-military force organized by the New Zionist Organization; it had boasted of responsibility for the reprisals against Arabs which marked the later stages of the disorders of 1936-39, and sometimes took the form of abominable bomb outrages. These activities were suspended in the general pacification which marked the beginning of the War, and the Irgun Zwei Leumi had co-operated in the war effort. Outrages were resumed, however, in the form of destruction of Government property from 1943 onward. Another more extreme group was organized by a former member of the Irgun Zwei Leumi, called Abraham Stern, who seceded with a number of followers and operated independently. The series of outrages culminated in an attempt on the life of the High Commissioner (August 8, 1944), the murder of a high official of the C.I.D., Assistant Superintendent T. J. Wilkin (September 29, 1944), and the assassination in Cairo of Lord Moyne, British Minister of State in the Middle East (November 6, 1944). The latter crime was the work of two young Jewish members of the Stern gang from Palestine. Fortunately for the Egyptian people, who might otherwise have been accused of complicity in the crime, the assassins were caught red-handed. In due course they were tried by an Egyptian court and hanged.

Zionist propaganda was meanwhile intensified throughout the world: in the United States of America in particular extremist organizations hired whole pages of leading newspapers for the insertion of propaganda denouncing the British Government; in these the latter were accused of having "written a new page in the history of the martyrdom of the Hebrew people." In those parts of the world in which the Jewish companies of the Palestinian regiment served, such as North Africa and parts of liberated Europe, they acted as propagandists of Zionism among the local Jews, utilizing their opportunities to spread the idea



of a Jewish state and to organize a movement for emigration to Palestine. In Great Britain Zionists for the first time secured control of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. In the United States of America a vigorous propaganda campaign induced both the Republican and the Democratic parties to include in their election platforms declarations in favour of Zionist aims in Palestine: the proposals of the latter received the endorsement of the President. Resolutions in this sense were introduced into the Foreign Affairs Committee of both the Senate and the House of Representatives, but were withdrawn on the intervention of representatives first of the War Department and later of the Department of State, on the grounds that such action would have had prejudicial effects on the war effort. On the other hand, for the first time since the issue of the Balfour Declaration those Jews who regarded themselves as forming part of a religious and not a politico-national community began to appear in organized opposition to the idea of Jewish statehood. In the United States of America in particular the American Council for Judaism issued a well-written paper with the title *Zionism versus Judaism*, and protested to President Roosevelt against the formation of the Jewish Brigade.

The other factor on the Jewish side which has to be taken into account was the frightful disaster which befell Jewry in Nazi-controlled Europe. It seems probable that in Poland and other areas directly under Nazi control something like 5,000,000 Jews perished as the result of ill-treatment, starvation, or direct massacre. This area was, of course, precisely that to which the Zionists looked as the main source of immigration to Palestine. The principal argument which used to be put forward as justification for the creation of a Jewish state was, in fact, that it was essential to withdraw 2,000,000 Jews from Europe. If it now proved that not more than 1,000,000 Jews remained in that area it seemed probable that the majority of these could be absorbed in the local environment soon after the anti-Semitic régime had been overthrown. It was quite possible, therefore, that there would not in the immediate future be any great pressure of immigration on Palestine. This possibility was obviously a source of anxiety to Zionists, who endeavoured, for example, to dissuade refugee Jews from accepting an offer of Italian nationality, and made great efforts to stimulate Jewish emigration from North Africa and from Asiatic areas, where the Jews could, but for Zionism, have lived in security and participated in the development and modernization of these areas.



To complete this survey of war-time developments it remains to say a few words about the foreign Powers interested in the Middle East.

French influence inevitably suffered an eclipse as a result of the collapse of 1940. The equivocal handling of the Syro-Lebanese situation by Vichy and the subsequent French régime did nothing to remedy this.

American influence had hitherto been manifested principally through the altruistic work of such institutions as the American University in Beirut. During the War new activities were developed through the Anglo-American Supply Centre and other commercial and political undertakings. American interest was further aroused by the importance of the oil deposit of Saudi Arabia. These developments tended to strengthen the American desire to establish good working relationships with the Arab countries. Thus the divergence between the viewpoint of American Government departments which had direct experience of the Arab East and American public opinion, which was continually influenced by Zionist propaganda, was greatly accentuated, and a position was created somewhat similar to that which had existed in Great Britain ten or twenty years earlier.

President Roosevelt himself, who had at first appeared to support Zionist aspirations, later gave increasing importance to the Arab case. After his visit to the Near East in the spring of 1945, during which he had an interview with King Ibn Saoud, he informed the latter in reply to an inquiry that no decision would be taken with respect to the basic situation in Palestine without full consultation with both Arabs and Jews, and that he would take no action in his capacity as chief of the Executive Branch of this Government which might prove hostile to the Arab people.

The Soviet attitude was more complex. In the régime established after the revolution anti-Semitism was repressed by law, while Yiddish-speaking Jews were permitted, and, indeed, encouraged, to consider themselves a nationality comparable to the other nationalities within the Soviet Union. In accordance with this policy they were allotted in Siberia an area of land called Biro-Bidjan, in which the Yiddish Jewish people could, if they desired, establish a National Home on a territorial basis. This was in reality an adaptation to modern times of the system by which the Jews in such countries as Poland or Turkey had in the past retained certain national characteristics within the



general State organization. Quite logically, the Soviet authorities at the same time outlawed Zionism, which, like anti-Semitism, treats the Jews in all the world as one homogeneous racial or national group, irrespective of their mother tongue or their particular State affiliations. Zionism was, moreover, regarded as an instrument of British imperialism, and, therefore, held to be a reactionary movement. With the change in the Soviet attitude towards Britain, which occurred from 1941 onward, some relaxation of this Soviet attitude towards Zionism was to be anticipated. While, therefore, Zionists as a whole remained resentful of the Soviet conduct with regard to Jewish affairs, one Zionist writer in 1944 went so far as to envisage a Russo-Zionist era. Many leading Zionists, he argued, were of Russian origin, while the communal Zionist settlements in Palestine were organized like those of the Soviets. He therefore considered that the Jewish settlement in Palestine was obviously designed to be that *point d'appui* in the Mediterranean to which Russia had been aspiring for many generations.

In the Middle East British conservatives have preferred an alliance with the feudalistic cliques of Arab notables to an alliance with the European colonizer, the Jew. These circumstances may push Soviet Russia into an active alliance with Palestinian Jewry, giving unconditional support for a Jewish Palestine. By pursuing such a policy Soviet Russia might not only gain the everlasting gratitude of many Jewish groups throughout the world and the approval of the various nations in Europe interested in the emigration of the Jews living in their countries, but would also create for itself an excellent position in the Middle East.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, it could be pointed out that the traditional base of Russian influence in Palestine was the Orthodox Church and the Christian Arabs. In view of the reconciliation of the Soviet Government and the Russian Church the restoration of the extensive educational establishments which Russia formerly possessed in Palestine would be a natural development. While for the moment it could not be said whether any decisive Russian influence would be exercised in favour of one party or the other, it was certain that there was a widespread though unorganized cult of Soviet ideas and organization among young Muslim intellectuals.

So far as could be judged from articles appearing in the Russian

<sup>1</sup> E. Ben Horin, *The Soviet Wooing of Palestine* [sic], in *Harper's Magazine* for April 1944.



Press, the Soviet attitude to the Arab world was one of general sympathy with Arab aspirations for independence and unity. At the same time, Soviet writers criticized the Arab League as artificially created by foreign influence and "high class." It seemed, in fact, as if Soviet Russia was suggesting to the young intellectuals and the working masses that an Arab orientation towards the Soviet might be more conducive to their social betterment and their national aspirations in general than reliance on the Arab League, with its existing foreign affiliations. Seen in this connexion the request made by the Soviet Government in the summer of 1945 for a Mandate over Libya might be regarded as a warning to other Powers interested in the Arab world. If granted, it would be a step towards a great enhancement of Russian influence in that area.

It thus became evident that in any permanent settlement of the Arab question in general, and of the Palestine problem in particular, both American and Russian views would have to be taken much more fully into consideration than had ever been the case in the past.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE BEVIN STATEMENT OF POLICY ; CONCLUSION

MARCH 31, 1944, was the all-important date under the terms of the White Paper of 1939 ; from that date Jewish immigration, which had been permitted from 1939 to 1944 at a rate little below the average of the preceding twenty-five years, was finally to cease, unless the Arabs acquiesced in its continuance. When the day came, however, the maximum of 75,000 immigrants sanctioned by the White Paper had not been reached, and war was still being waged. In these circumstances a compromise was tacitly accepted by both parties by which the unexpended surplus of certificates was carried forward for a further period. The question therefore did not become acute until the spring of 1945. If the Government now left to the Arabs the decision as to the future of Jewish immigration the promises made a quarter of a century earlier would have been supported by action, and the Arab fear that " the intention was to create a Jewish National Home to the disappearance of the Arab population, language, and culture " <sup>1</sup> would finally be exorcized.

Zionist Jews, for their part, were little affected by Arab fears. On the contrary, they put forward the view that the White Paper of 1939 should be considered as an example of ' appeasement,' in the worst sense of the word. Now that the War had been won, its provisions should be disregarded. Zionist hopes, in this respect, centred on the Labour Party, which had opposed the White Paper from the beginning, and had declared that they would not necessarily be bound by it when they assumed office. In December 1944, moreover, a statement on foreign policy made by the Party Executive had contained a paragraph urging that Jews should be admitted to Palestine in such numbers as to become the majority ; that the Arabs should " be encouraged to move out as the Jews move in " ; and that the present Palestinian boundaries should be extended by agreement with Egypt, Syria, or Transjordan.

From the Zionist point of view this statement erred only by the

<sup>1</sup> Command 1700, June 1922 ; *cf.* p. 109.



excessive frankness with which it envisaged the disappearance of the Arabs from Palestine. When, therefore, the Labour Party were returned to power in the General Election of 1945 with a big majority Zionist hopes were greatly stimulated. They were further strengthened by sympathy expressed in the United States of America and by the fact that President Truman—in ignorance, as it subsequently appeared, of his predecessor's commitments to the Arabs—requested the new British Prime Minister to admit 100,000 Jewish immigrants to Palestine immediately as an earnest of further concessions to come.

This was the background against which both parties stated their case before the British public.

The Arab point of view was developed as follows by Abdul Rahman Azzam Bey, Secretary-General of the Arab League, during his visit to London in the autumn of 1945. The Arab League, he said, was the first step towards the realization of old-established and profound Arab aspirations. Though Palestine was an essential portion of the Arab homeland, the Arabs were prepared to accept the existing Jewish community and give all Palestinians, of whatever religion or faith, full rights of citizenship within a Palestinian state. A distinction ought to be made between the Palestinian problem, by which was meant the relation of Arabs and Jews within the country, and the problem of world Jewry. The latter had resulted from European anti-Semitism; it was in no way the responsibility of the Arabs. If the United Nations produced a scheme by which member countries would each accept a quota of immigrants according to their capacity, then the Arab states would take part or contribute funds. As to Palestine, the country had already accepted more Jewish immigrants than most people considered reasonable, and it should not be expected to take more. Zionist agitation on the subject was inspired in the first place not by humanitarian but by political motives. The proof of this was the alleged reluctance of Zionists to allow Palestinian Jews to emigrate to the United States of America or elsewhere, their efforts to collect immigrants from any and every country, and their attempt to discourage displaced Jews from settling anywhere except in Palestine.

Zionists, on the other hand, claimed that the disaster which had befallen Jewry in Europe was a proof of their basic thesis that Jewish troubles were due to their national homelessness. Jews, they said, were not to be regarded as a religious community with branches throughout the world, but as the scattered survivors of a long-disappeared state. They therefore appeared to the nations



as ghosts who were bound to inspire hostility and fear in their neighbours until such time as they were 'laid' by achieving possession of a state territory of their own. It was further assumed that since Jews had made little or nothing of other possible centres which had been or were still available—for example, Kenya, the Argentine, or Biro-Bidjan—this state territory could only be Palestine, where historical sentiment called forth their constructive abilities.

Meeting the objection that Palestine was too small, too poor in natural resources, and too crowded to admit immigration on the scale which they wished, Zionists pointed out the remarkable success with which they had already settled a half a million Jews. They called attention to the fact that there was further room for agricultural settlement in the well-watered Galilean Hills and, if water could be made available, in the southern desert area. They quoted the scheme put forward by an American soil-preservation expert, Lowdermilk, who had visited Palestine before the War and advocated taking the water of the Jordan for irrigation and supplying its place by sea-water from the Mediterranean. This, it was alleged, would make possible the settlement of further large numbers in the Jordan valley. By utilizing the fall between the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea it might be possible also to secure a source of hydro-electric power. With regard to the Balfour Declaration, they claimed that if it did not promise a Jewish state it had at least guaranteed "the opportunity to bring about conditions which might in time make a Jewish state possible."<sup>1</sup> As to Arab opposition, this, they said, had been greatly exaggerated by interested persons. It could easily be dealt with if Britain and the other United Nations would take a firm stand. In evoking support for these claims Zionists were able to rely upon the sympathy which the Jewish disaster had aroused and the fact that there remained in Europe a number of Jews variously estimated at between a hundred thousand and a million and half for whom it was alleged no suitable home could be found outside Palestine.

When the Labour Party came into power it soon became apparent that they did not intend to commit themselves without mature deliberation. Zionist disappointment showed itself in agitation which came to a climax when, in the autumn of 1945, it was believed that a statement of policy unacceptable to Zionists was about to be issued. On a night in October a sudden co-ordinated attack was made by Zionist armed forces on the

<sup>1</sup> Viscount Samuel, House of Lords, December 12, 1945.



Palestine railway system. This outrage, which caused a great deal of damage and some loss of life, was evidently intended as an indication of the force of which Zionists could dispose. Its reactions in the Arab world outside Palestine were serious. In Cairo the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration on November 2 was marked by a violent mob onslaught on Jewish and other property ; a few days later a pogrom, in which over a hundred Jews lost their lives and much Jewish property was destroyed, took place in Tripolitania.

The new Government policy was finally announced in the House of Commons by the British Foreign Secretary, Mr Bevin, on November 13. The essential feature was the appointment, with the assent of the United States Government, of an Anglo-American Committee of inquiry consisting of six British and six American members, to be presided over by a British and an American chairman in rotation. This Committee had a dual task : on the one hand, it was to ascertain the numbers of the surviving Jews in the European areas formerly controlled by the Nazis and the prospects of their resettlement in Europe or elsewhere ; and on the other to examine in particular the political, economic, and social conditions affecting Jewish immigration into Palestine. On the basis of their report His Majesty's Government would first explore, with the parties concerned, the possibilities for temporary arrangements, and then propose a final solution for submission to the United Nations. In general, it was envisaged that Palestine policy would be controlled by the terms of a trusteeship agreement which would supersede the existing Mandate. As to the immediate issue of immigration, the Government would "consult the Arabs with a view to an agreement which would ensure that, pending the receipt of the *ad interim* recommendations which the Committee of inquiry will make in the matter, there is no interruption of Jewish immigration at the present monthly rate"—subsequently defined as 1500. The declaration included a statement to the effect that while Palestine might be able to make a contribution to the problem of Jewish immigration it could not by itself solve the whole problem.

The reaction of the Arab League was not unfavourable, though a protest was registered against continued immigration and the reference to trusteeship instead of independence. The same objections were expressed much more vehemently by the Palestine Higher Committee. The latter had been reconstituted after great difficulty, due in part to the lack of any organized political life among the Arabs since the dissolution of the Arab Higher



Committee in 1937, in part to the absence of the most qualified leader, Jamal Husseini, in exile, and in part to the bitter memories left by the assassination of Arabs by Arabs which had occurred during the rising of 1936-39.

Zionist reaction was strong and immediate, the statement being described as "sterile," "deeply disappointing," and as "a fresh proffer of stale evasions" to which "the Jews would never submit."<sup>1</sup> A secret radio, believed to be run by the Haganah, or Jewish Agency "Defence Force," spoke of "the great betrayal," and added that "what Hitler did in wiping out millions of our brothers is now being completed by the British Government."<sup>2</sup> Subsequent weeks were marked by periodical outbursts of violence. These took two forms. One consisted of murderous attacks made by the Irgun Zwei Leumi or other Zionist bodies not under the control of the Jewish Agency upon military and police establishments in general, such as police headquarters at Jerusalem. In the other the Haganah, controlled by the Jewish Agency, was employed to cover the landing of illegal immigrants. The latter operations included attacks with bombs or other lethal weapons upon military or police establishments, such as coast-guard stations, which were directly concerned with the enforcement of the immigration laws. Activity of the latter nature was justified by Zionist apologists on the grounds that the Government itself was behaving illegally in limiting Jewish immigration. Representatives of the Jewish Agency, in an interview with the High Commissioner on December 28, 1945, declared that they deplored the loss of life in the attacks made by the Irgun Zwei Leumi; in view of the nature of the Government's policy and the consequent state of Jewish feeling in Palestine they did not, however, consider that any good purpose would be served by their appealing for a cessation of violence. This attitude was reminiscent of that of the Arab Higher Committee in 1937, and led the Press to speculate whether in these circumstances the Zionist Organization could any longer be considered by the Government as a suitable agency under Article IV of the Mandate to advise and co-operate with the Administration of Palestine.

It would be foolish in writing at a time when the Anglo-American Committee are making their inquiry to attempt to anticipate their recommendations or to estimate whether the introduction of the American element will cause the Committee

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, November 15, 1945.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, November 19, 1945.



as a whole to approximate to the Zionist point of view or will result in a greater appreciation of the Arab point of view on the part of the transatlantic members. It is, however, safe to say that it is essential in the interests of both Arabs and Jews that a definite decision should be taken on the major issue of whether or not it is intended to set up a Jewish state, regardless of Arab opposition. To recommend its establishment would involve a complete reversal of British policy and be the repudiation of assurances given to the Arabs on many occasions during the last twenty-eight years ; it would cause a turmoil in the Near East of which the results cannot be foreseen. It seems certain that such a state could not for many decades contain more than, say, two and a half million inhabitants, including Arabs—that is to say, that it could not take more than about one-tenth or one-twelfth of the total Jewish world population of to-day. The practical difficulties involved in setting it up would in any case be very great. If, on the other hand, the idea of a Jewish state were rejected, then practical measures would have to be taken, in the interests of peace, to prevent the National Home from being any longer used as a stepping-stone to such an objective. Palestine has already absorbed some hundreds of thousands of Jewish immigrants and become a country in which the Jews form a much larger percentage of the population than in any other part of the world. This, with the assurance of rights for internal autonomy, could legitimately be considered as the fulfilment of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate. Any further development would be dependent on agreement arrived at by the Jews with the Arabs, without foreign intervention. It is perhaps appropriate to recall here that King Hussein in happier times once informed a representative of the Zionist Movement that he was prepared to accept the help of the Jews in defending the rights of the Arabs and to “give them land free, provided they would enter through the door and not make a breach in the walls.”<sup>1</sup> According to this view, then, the Mandate would disappear as an instrument of government, together with the provisions for Jewish immigration and land settlement ; with it would go the Jewish Agency which was created to carry them out. The interests of the Jewish National Home in Palestine would henceforth be entrusted to the Jewish National Council within the country. At the same time those provisions of the White Paper of 1939 which were designed to protect the Arab population against abuse of the Mandate in the matter of Jewish

<sup>1</sup> F. H. Kisch, *Palestine Diary* (London, 1938), p. 96.



immigration and settlement on the land would also disappear. Future legislation would be designed in the interests of the country as a whole, not in those of one community only.

The precise nature of the constitution to be established would, of course, still remain to be determined. It might resemble that of Syria, where the minority communities, believing the best guarantee of their future to be the goodwill with which they contribute to the common welfare, rejected any special guarantees. Alternatively, Palestine might be given a federated government on a cantonal basis, or, in view of its unique character as the Holy Land of three religions, a constitution such as that outlined in the spring of 1945 in the project published over the names of the Hon. R. Beaumont and Colonel S. F. Newcombe. This suggested a bicameral legislature in which the Lower House would be elected on a territorial basis or by proportional representation, while the Upper House would consist in perpetuity of equal numbers of Muslims, Jews, and Christians.

In such circumstances the Jewish National Home, or Hebrew-speaking community of Palestine, could fulfil the purpose of inspiring and to a limited extent materially assisting world Jewry. This will seem a small thing to those Jews who have been led by suffering or by ambition to an attempt, in which they have displayed much heroism, to end all Jewish troubles, and, incidentally, to redeem the world, by the establishment of a Hebrew state in Palestine. Their disappointment will be tragic and find expression for a time in violence of word and deed. The fact remains that the problem of the Jewish masses can be solved only in lands rich and spacious enough to support them; nothing but further trouble can come from the failure to recognize this reality, unpalatable as it is. Jewish men of religion have always held that the Messianic hope could not be achieved by material means, certainly not by political methods of doubtful honesty or by violence. Complete security for Israel can be brought about only by a new spirit in mankind and a new world order. Zion, taught the prophets, is not to be built by blood nor Jerusalem by iniquity—neither by an army nor by force, but by the Spirit of God.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Micah iii, 10; Zechariah iv, 6.



## POSTSCRIPT

THE "Report of the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry regarding the Problems of European Jewry and Palestine" (Command 6808) was published early in May 1946. The Committee found that Palestine could not alone meet the needs of the Jewish victims of persecution. Nevertheless, while suggesting that the U.S.A., Britain, and other countries should seek to find homes for displaced persons of all creeds, they recommended that 100,000 certificates should be issued immediately for the admission of Jews to Palestine. They added that Palestine should not become either an Arab or a Jewish state. Ultimately it should become a Palestinian state, in which Muslims, Jews, and Christians should have equal rights ; but no attempt should be made to set up this state until the present hostility between Jews and Arabs had disappeared. Meanwhile Arab standards of education and life should be raised to those of the Jews. The 1940 Regulations should be rescinded and other (unspecified) steps taken to provide adequate protection for small owners and tenant cultivators. With regard to the Lowdermilk and similar schemes, the Committee observed that if it were technically possible to carry these successfully into effect they would increase the absorptive capacity of the country and raise the standard of living of Jew and Arab alike ; but friendly Arab-Jewish relations were an essential condition of such schemes. They recommended the suppression of any attempt to use violence by either side. They expressed the view that the Jewish Agency should co-operate in the suppression of terrorism and illegal immigration. For the time being government should be carried on according to the terms of the Mandate, including the encouragement of Jewish immigration ; the Mandate should later be converted into a trusteeship under the United Nations.

Thus the Committee wished, in essentials, to return to the Mandatory régime as it existed before the Arab rising of 1936 and the publication of the Royal Commission's Report. The Arabs were once again to be assured that there was no intention of setting up a Jewish state, but the Jews were to retain the international organization of the Jewish Agency and their privileged position as regards immigration and land settlement ; this would seem still to leave them, in Lord Samuel's words (p. 227), the "opportunity to bring about conditions which might in time make a Jewish state possible." In view of these somewhat unrealistic recommendations, the British Prime Minister stated that the disarmament of the Jewish illegal forces and the assurance of American military and financial support would be essential preliminaries to the implementation of the Committee's recommendations.



## APPENDIX

### I. *Jewish Population of the World in 1938 by Continents*<sup>1</sup>

Europe	.	.	.	.	9,924,000 <sup>2</sup>
America	.	.	.	.	5,286,000
Asia	.	.	.	.	868,000
Africa	.	.	.	.	609,000
Australasia	.	.	.	.	30,000
					16,717,000

### II. *Principal Areas with Very Large Jewish Population in 1938*

U.S.A.	.	.	.	.	4,700,000
Poland	.	.	.	.	3,345,000
U.S.S.R.	.	.	.	.	3,180,000
Romania	.	.	.	.	800,000
Arab world	.	.	.	.	1,097,000

### III. *Jewish Immigration into Palestine, by Countries of Previous Abode*<sup>3</sup> (Percentage of Total for 1922-38)

			1922-29	1935	1936	1937	1938
Germany	.	.	—	14	27	34	52
Poland	.	.	46	46	41	35	25
Romania	.	.	6	6	5	3	4
U.S.S.R.	.	.	20	1	2	3	1
Lithuania	.	.	5	3	3	2	1
U.S.A.	.	.	3	3	1	2	1
Others	.	.	20	27	21	21	16
			100	100	100	100	100

<sup>1</sup> From A. Ruppin, *The Jewish Fate and Future* (London, 1940).

<sup>2</sup> Reduced by Nazi massacres to 4,224,000 in 1946.

<sup>3</sup> Palestine Department of Migration, Annual Report, 1942.



IV. *Estimates of Economic Absorptive Capacity of Palestine on Six-monthly Basis*<sup>1</sup>

	JEWISH AGENCY'S ESTIMATE	CERTIFICATES GRANTED BY GOVERNMENT
April-September 1935 . . .	19,160	8,000
September 1935-March 1936 . . .	10,900	3,250
April-September 1936 . . .	11,000	4,500
October 1936-March 1937 . . .	10,695	1,800
April-September 1937 . . .	11,250	770
October 1937-March 1938 . . .	3,000	1,780
April-September 1938 . . .	—	1,000
October 1938-March 1939 . . .	4,625	1,000

V. *Capitalist Immigrants—i.e., possessing at least £1000—1930-38*<sup>2</sup>

YEAR	NO. OF IMMIGRANTS	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
1930 . . .	178	4
1931 . . .	233	6
1932 . . .	727	8
1933 . . .	3,250	11
1934 . . .	5,124	12
1935 . . .	6,309	10
1936 . . .	2,970	10
1937 . . .	1,225	12
1938 . . .	1,753	14

<sup>1</sup> *Great Britain and Palestine* (RIIA, July 1939).

<sup>2</sup> *Palestine Department of Migration, Annual Report, 1938.*



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